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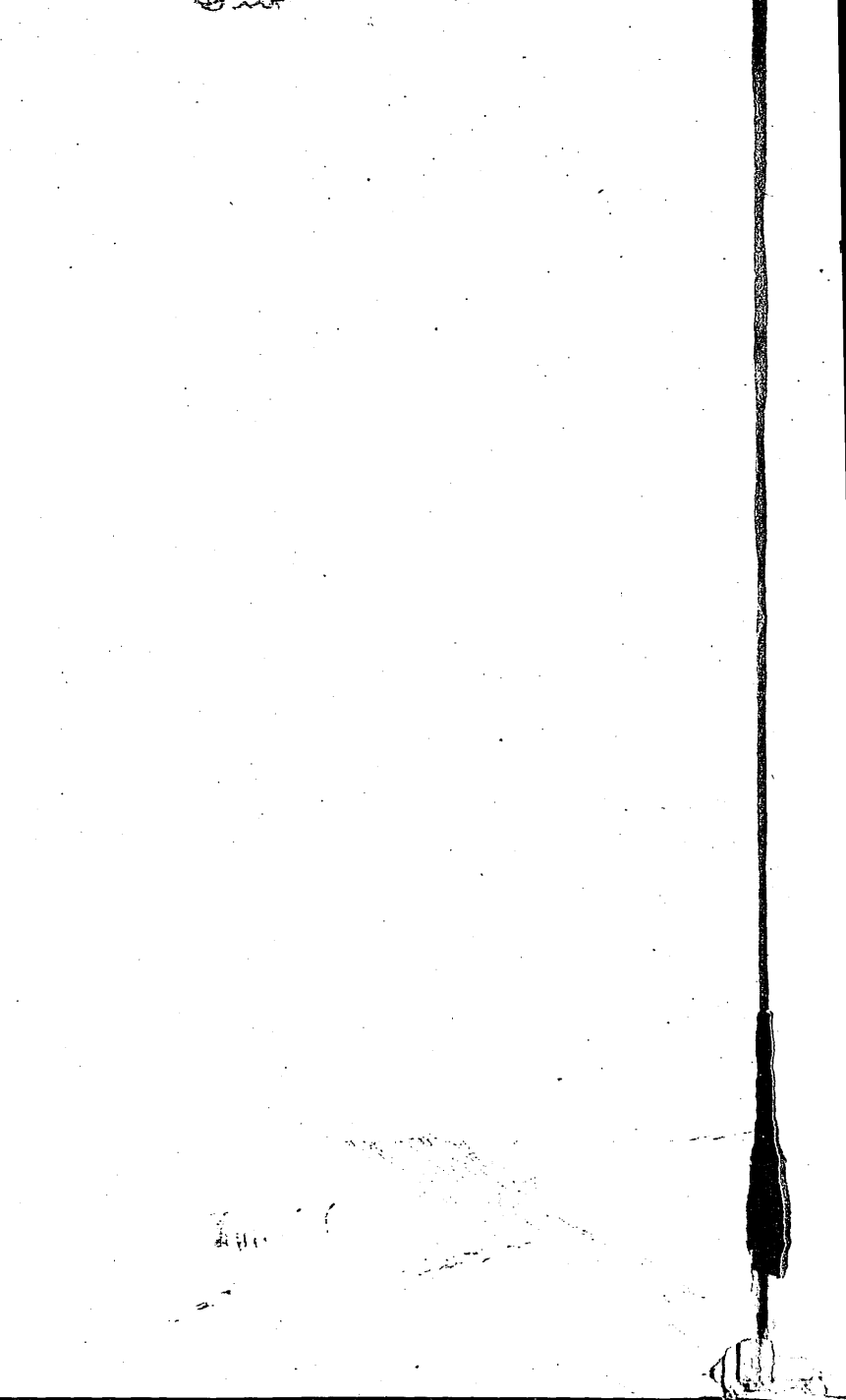
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CHRIST,

THE LIFE OF THE WORLD:

Biblical Studies

ON THE

ELEVENTH TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTERS
OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

BY
RUDOLPH BESSER, D.D.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN,
BY M. G. HUXTABLE.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE translation, the completion of which is now presented to the English Public, takes up those parts of Dr. Besser's *Bibel-Stunden* which contain his commentary upon the Gospel of St. John. These are the volume *Das Evangelium St. Johannis* entire, comprising the commentary upon most of the first seventeen chapters, and portions of *Die Leidens-und Herrlichkeits-Geschichte*. Pains have been taken to make the commentary upon the whole gospel complete out of Dr. Besser's materials, with only such transpositions and dove-tailings as the plan of following the order of the sacred text, as given in the gospel itself, appeared to render imperative.

The commentary, then, is Dr. Besser's, and Dr. Besser's only. A translator is in general not to be understood as endorsing every sentiment of the original author; if it were so, the consequence would most probably be that Dr. Besser's commentary must ever remain unknown in an English dress; since there is no school of religious thought, whether in England or in Scotland, which would be able to accept the author as a fair exponent of its views. Dr. Besser is a Lutheran, both in doctrine and in ecclesiastical discipline, and is at the same time a man who holds his views heartily, and propounds them uncompromisingly, in strong and sharp outline. There are few individuals, even in Great Britain, who would be disposed (for example) to embrace, without some modification, the teaching of this work

relative to Holy Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, as developed in the commentary on the third and sixth chapters of the Gospel. Nevertheless, if deep, earnest, practical piety—a learning which has readily at command the fruits of all modern Biblical scholarship—and an unction which testifies to a Divine commission to teach in the Church—furnish qualifications entitling an author to be heard, then there are very few writers in the present day, if any, whose writings are more deserving of serious and devout perusal. Even when the reader is conscious of a divergence in the author's views from those which he has himself been led to entertain, he will perhaps do well to pause before he throws by as utterly worthless what he cannot himself at once agree with, and either reflect whether what he reads should not suggest some modification of his own sentiments, or at least learn to reverence the piety which he sees co-existing with the holding of a somewhat different dogma.

In rendering the frequent citations from Luther, with which Dr. Besser has enriched his commentary, it has been thought proper to aim at retaining, as far as could be, the homeliness and racy uncouthness of the great Reformer's own diction. If at times the style in such passages appears to border on the coarse, the reader is requested to bear in mind when and by what manner of man they were indited. But friends of the Reformation need not be ashamed to see the frank and lion-hearted Luther standing out to view just such as he really was.

Some few passages in the original, containing references to phases of religious thought peculiar to modern Germany, and such as few English readers would either understand or care to have explained, have been omitted:—together with one or two in which the translator has been unable to satisfy herself of the exact meaning which they were intended to convey.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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Moreover, at the end of each section, Dr. Besser has made a résumé of the salient points in the section, thrown into a devotional form. As it was desirable, if possible, to lessen the size of the work, and as these portions do not add much to the material stock of thought, and admitted of being removed without making any dislocation in the whole work, they have been throughout omitted.

With these exceptions, it has been the aim of the translator to reproduce the original without any modification.

WESTON YOYLAND, *19th Feb.* 1862.

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CHRIST THE LIFE OF THE WORLD.

The Raising of Lazarus from the Dead.

ST. JOHN XI. 1-45.

I. OUR FRIEND LAZARUS SLEEPETH ; BUT I GO THAT I MAY AWAKE HIM OUT OF SLEEP.—VER. 1-27.

Teach us, O Lord, to understand Thy speech concerning death, and give us power, though we were dead, yet to live! Amen.

ST. JOHN, in the course of his Gospel history, is now approaching nearer and nearer to the fulfilment of the Good Shepherd's word: "I lay down my life for the sheep." The eleventh and twelfth chapters, which form the new section we have commenced to-day, visibly represent to us the *power* of the Good Shepherd to lay down His life.

Both in word and in work, in which He is One with the Father, the glory of Christ comes mightily forth as a true witness, testifying to the word which He had spoken, that no man taketh His life from Him, but that He layeth it down of Himself. Death flees before Him; without His will no man dies: *He is the Resurrection and the Life*. It is in this light that we should contemplate the narrative which St. John has related with all that graphic distinctness which the careful observation of love could alone have imparted.

In the coronet of Christ's miracles this has ever been valued

as a pearl of inestimable price!* Many good works He had already shown from His Father to that people whose faith He sought to win, revealing Himself as the incarnate *Word*, who is the Light and Life of the world; and now the last glorious miracle will He exhibit to them, if perchance therein they might at length perceive His glory. And many did see it, and believed in Him (ver. 45). But the disciples who from Cana up to Bethany under the “opened Heaven” had followed the Son of Man—how must not their faith have been strengthened, and thus have been prepared to meet the hour which was now approaching, when Christ their Life gave Himself up to death.

Ver. 1, 2. “*Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)*”

It was *Bethany* that was selected to be the sacred spot in which the Lord would reveal His glory. The readers of St. John’s Gospel already know this Bethany and its inhabitants from Gospel tradition; and to such tradition John refers when he calls Bethany the town of the sisters *Mary* and *Martha* (Luke x. 38, &c). Especially was that disciple who, sitting at Jesus’ feet, had chosen the good part, known among the first Christians, in the blessed hearing and keeping of the word, as the type and pattern of the Church. On that account St. John

* It was reserved for that disciple whom Jesus loved to record this particular incident of the revelation of His glory. In chap. vii.-xi. John places the Lord Jesus before us bearing patiently the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and as yet for this little while enlightening Jerusalem with His light. In connexion with this stands the account of the raising of Lazarus. In general it is not the design of the three first Evangelists to relate everything connected with our Saviour which took place during His occasional visits to Jerusalem; and in reference to this point in particular, the Holy Ghost, under whose guidance they wrote, knew full well for whom He had reserved the task of giving the relation. It is also possible that when the three first Evangelists wrote Lazarus was still living, and that they wished to save him from the indelicate distinction of hearing his history read in the church.

names Mary first, although Martha was properly the mistress of the house, with whom the younger sister and brother were living, and at the same time (anticipating what he afterwards is going to relate in its proper place in chap. xii. 1, &c.) he mentions *the anointing*, which, according to the Lord's express prophecy, has made Mary's name as safe from being forgotten as the very Gospel itself (Matt. xxvi. 13).

Ver. 3. "*Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*"

How beautiful and touching this *petition*! If the Lord loves him who lieth sick, then there is indeed no distress. Love makes the beloved one's sickness its own sickness, and here is the love of Him who is Lord over all sickness. "*Lord, behold!*"—they add nothing more; but therein they embody all their entreaty for help and likewise all their assurance that the Lord is both willing and able to "behold" and to help the beloved sick one. As Augustine paraphrases their request: "It is enough, Lord, that thou knowest it; for thou dost not love and yet forsake the beloved one."

A faithful, pious preacher was once lying dangerously ill, and the members of his church were praying earnestly at his bedside that the Lord would raise him up and preserve him to them; in doing so, among other things, they made mention of his tender watchfulness in feeding the lambs of the flock, making use of the expression, "Lord, thou knowest how he loves thee." At this the sick man turned to them and said, "Ah, children, do not pray thus! when Mary and Martha sent to Jesus, their message was not—Lord, he who loveth *thee*, but—Lord, behold, he whom *thou* lovest is sick! It is not my imperfect love to Him which comforts me, but His perfect love to me."

Ver. 4. "*When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*"

Compare chapter ix. 3. *This* sickness of His friend, which to Him was so well known, was *not unto death*. Lazarus in-

deed died, but the friends of the Prince of Life live though they die. "Behold, what a new doctrine Christ preaches: death is no longer death!" (*Brenz.*) The sickness of Lazarus, which issued in his dying, was not appointed to be unto death, but unto resurrection from death, unto the glory of God, the Father and the Son; "for as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will," that the Oneness of the Father and the Son might be made manifest. But what applies to Lazarus's sickness, which was not *unto* death, though it issued in death, applies also to all Christians: whether power over our mortal body is allowed to death for four days, or for four times forty thousand days, the result will be all one, when at length the glory of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life will even in our bodies be made manifest. Luther even says, that on the resurrection-day Adam will feel just the same as if he had only fallen asleep last night.

Mary and Martha had already their brother's corpse before them when the Lord's answer reached them (ver. 17). Now they were called to *believe themselves into* the understanding of the word: "*Not unto death, but for the glory of God!*" This word the Lord lets down into the depth of their sorrow as a ladder of salvation, that on its shaft they might mount up to that higher elevation to which He would fain raise them.

Ver. 5, 6. "*Now Jesus loved Martha*"—Martha as well as Mary—"and her sister, and Lazarus. When He had heard, therefore, that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was."

Here, again, St. John speaks with that vivid remembrance of what he himself had witnessed which seemed to make it again present before him. Jesus loved,—and yet He still remained two days in Perea: what a contradiction that seems! But to the disciples the Lord's word in ver. 4 explained the seeming contradiction, and not for a moment did they doubt his love to the family at Bethany. In what way, indeed, the

glory of their Lord was to be revealed in His and their sick friend they as yet did not know; but afterwards they learnt that it was out of pure love that instead of hastening He still tarried (ver. 15).

The Lord loves thee, and yet He tarries with His consolation! Be still, my soul, for thou shalt yet praise Him for having refused thee a smaller boon that He might bestow upon thee a greater.

Ver. 7. "*Then after that saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judea again.*"

After that, after these two days of tarrying, on which St. John's soul lingers so thoughtfully, came the third day, a day of joy. *Judea*, the Saviour says, not *Bethany*. From Bethany, Judea, the land of enmity to Jesus, was now to be irradiated by the bright lustre of the Son of God for the last time; after *that* it was His purpose to die and rise again, in order to meet again His assembled followers in Galilee (Matt. xxvi. 32). The disciples were alarmed at the journey into Judea; they were afraid of "the Jews."

Ver. 8. "*His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again?*"

But the Lord teaches them to know His way:

Ver. 9, 10. "*Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.*"

As well in reference to Himself as to them the Lord bids the disciples be of good heart concerning His journey to Jerusalem, for it is a Jesus's own journey. He goes to Jerusalem in order to fulfil His day's work, the eleventh hour of which had now begun; the twelfth hour of His day He had yet to complete, for while it is day He must work (ch. ix. 4). But His day of work, even to the last hour of labour, is lighted by the sun of the Almighty Father's counsel and will; in no night of His own will—a will separated from the Father's will—was it possible

for *Him* to get involved, a night wherein that bright light should not be within Him. Now, just as any one who walks in the day, in the light of the sun, does not *stumble* on his way, so, in like manner, no stoning, no crucifying even, by the Jews could ever be to the Son of God, in whom the Father dwelt as a Light dispelling the darkness, any occasion of stumbling in that path of redeeming mercy along which He was now going. And the disciples, if only they will steadily follow their Lord, when He says: "Let *us* go into Judea again," they shall not stumble either; for then would they walk, not in the night, without the clear, protecting light of the word, but in the day, in obedience to their calling, and in the full radiance of the light which they had received into their souls. We learn from the history of the Passion that the Devil longed to turn the Lord Jesus' day into night, but he longed to do it in vain. With the disciples he very nearly succeeded in taking away their light: already not only a Thomas, but even a Peter was stumbling; but, in God's gracious hour, the Light rose upon them again.

Oh, that all our ways were *as in the day*, in the light of that clear, Divine word which enlightens our eyes to know our calling. In that case, though they were ways like this of the disciples into Judea—ways of deep affliction—yet even the night must become light to us, and the known word of God which we obey would bear us aloft, as on eagles' wings, above all obstacles, even to that blessed goal which Jesus made it His object to attain.

Ver. 11. "*These things said He: and after that He saith unto them: Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.*"

After the words by which the Lord silenced the fears of His disciples a pause ensued. Then suddenly He says: "*Our friend Lazarus sleepeth!*" [literally, *is fallen asleep.*] The departing soul of the beloved friend in the moment of death stretched herself out in eager aspiration towards the Joy and Light of

her life, and He seemed far away; but Jesus heard her sigh, and here He answers it by the tender words: "*Lazarus, our friend, sleepeth now!*"

Our friend—because Jesus loved him, the disciples also loved him—like all true disciples they had the same friends and the same joys with their Saviour. The Lord was also moved to speak in this condescending way of Lazarus as of a friend whom He had, in common with them, by the tone of feeling which the disciples showed in thinking more of the stoning Jews than of their sick friend.

The friend of Jesus and of His disciples now *slept*. Oh, blessed friendship, which transforms our death into sleep! If Lazarus slept, then there lay before him an awakening (Ps. xvii. 15); and, indeed, even now *He* was approaching before whom the dead do but sleep; that they may hear His voice,—hear it with an ear quicker even than that of the child which is awake by its mother in the morning: "*I go that I may awake him out of sleep.*"

But the disciples understood not this saying of their Master concerning death (the Apostles learnt it afterwards, Matt. xxvii. 52; 1 Cor. xv. 20; 1 Thes. iv. 13), no, not even yet, although Jairus' "*sleeping*" daughter ought, surely, to have sufficed to teach it them.

Ver. 12, 13. "*Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.*"

Yes, indeed! he shall do well; but in a manner far beyond what the disciples thought. They take the refreshing "*sleep*" of their sick friend to be a gift from their Lord, miraculously putting forth His healing power through the long distance which separated them, and they mean to say: "Then his sickness has, indeed, already turned out to the glory of God! Soon he will awake up strengthened;—dost Thou, then, go into Judea?" As Chrysostom expresses the sense of their words: "Thou sayest,

Lord, he sleeps, there is therefore, surely, now no cause for our going there."

Because the disciples do not understand heavenly speech concerning death, the Lord descends to the earthly form of expression, and translates the heavenly word—fall asleep—into the earthly one—die.

Ver. 14, 15. "*Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead; and I am glad, for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe: nevertheless, let us go unto him.*"

He is *dead*—and I am *glad*! Whilst the hearts of the sorrow-stricken disciples die within them, and they secretly sigh: "Ah, if Thou hadst but set out the day before yesterday, instead of waiting till to-day!" the Lord says that He is glad. Glad He was—not on *Lazarus'* account, for although He was going to awake him, He yet most deeply felt the sorrows of His friend being *dead* (ver. 35)—but for the *disciples'* sake, because He was concerned for the strengthening of their *faith* by the revelation which He was about to make of His glory. (That ye may *believe*—that ye may reach a higher step in the life of faith, viewed from which your former faith will appear to you to be no faith at all. Comp. chap. ii. 11).

If the Lord had been present at Bethany Lazarus would not have died; the justness of this conviction of the two sisters (ver. 21, 32) is confirmed by what the Lord himself says here. But what was it that would then have guarded Lazarus from the approach of death? The entreaties of Martha and Mary whom Jesus loved, and whose prayers He would not have withstood. But Bengel's remark will also apply, when he says: "It agrees beautifully with Divine decorum, that Scripture nowhere speaks of any one having died in the presence of the Prince of Life. If we suppose that Death could not have assailed Lazarus when Jesus was near, the words of the two sisters gain a much more sublime signification, and the Lord's joy on account of His absence appears in a clearer light." Yes, it is so; and now we may estimate the Power which He must have had to be able to give

up His life unto death, when, in His life-streaming presence, Death ventured not to kill even a child of death.

"Nevertheless, let us go unto him,"—the *dead* one, who *sleeps*! The Lord goes that He may awake him; but the disciples He desires to accompany Him, that they may thereby be led to believe on Him as the Resurrection and the Life. But there was one amongst them who could not raise his eyes to discern in this journey to the house of mourning at Bethany any cheering views of resurrection and life.

Ver. 16. "*Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus (Thomas, in Hebrew, is in Greek, Didymus, both words meaning twin), unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go that we may die with him.*"

To him, to our departed friend, will our Master go: let us also then set out, that with Him we may die, and rejoin our friend who is gone before us (2 Sam. xii. 23): What does he mean by that? Is it the courage of self-devoting love which makes Thomas thus speak? Does he mean to say what St. Peter afterwards said: "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison and to death." Well—Yes!—he, too, desires never to be separated from his beloved Master; but there is likewise in his words a deep despondency, a kind of despair of that Kingdom of God ever being set up of which he had formerly hailed the Lord Christ as King. There is no consolation left us, he would say, but that of *dying* with him with whom we *had* hoped to *live* for ever. We hoped that this was He that should have redeemed Israel—the grief thus afterwards expressed by others was now gnawing at the heart of Thomas also. "With Lazarus were buried in Hades, so the disciples thought, all their hopes of the new Day which was to arise upon Israel." (Luthardt.) But to us, to the followers of Him who, through Night, has pressed forward into the light of that new Day, who, through suffering, has entered into His Glory, it is fitting that we make Thomas's words, spoken by him in sadness and dejection, our own

in the spirit of elate and joyous self-sacrifice. "Let us also go, that we may die with Jesus."

Ver. 17-19. "*Then when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off. And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.*"

As the Lord had before said, so He now found it to be at Bethany. Already four days of mourning had Martha and Mary passed without Him whom they loved,—unrefreshed by the officious comforters, who had come over in a considerable number from Jerusalem (which was only about two miles distant from Bethany); some of them, perhaps, commenting, half complainingly, half sneeringly, on the absent Friend of the family (ver. 37). At length—but alas! too late, the sisters sigh—Jesus comes.

Ver. 20. "*Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house.*"

It appears that Martha, even in the midst of her mourning, was "cumbered about much serving," and busy with the reception of her guests as they came in one after another. She was the first to hear of Jesus' arrival, and immediately hastened to meet Him. The retiring Mary sat at home in the house, absorbed in her grief; she was secretly communing with the Friend to whom she was crying out in the longing of her soul, and whose word of comfort, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God," she longed to believe, but could not as yet lay hold of. But she was more self-collected, more ready to see the glory of the Son of God, than her sister was; Martha needed a sermon to prepare her mind.

Ver. 21, 22. "*Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.*"

What? Does she *accuse* the Lord for not having been there?

She does not mean to do that. But while she, almost involuntarily, at the sight of the long-wished-for One disclosed to Him the lamentation in which, during those four days, both the sisters had given vent to their inmost feelings: "Ah, if thou hadst been here!"—she herself feels that her words contain a slight tone of reproach; and in consequence she hurriedly goes on, with violent effort transposing herself into an elevation of feeling into which she was not quite at home: "*But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.*" She knew it, for she believed in Christ (ver. 27), the Son of God, the Awakener of the young man at Nain and of the daughter of Jairus; she *knew* that Christ *could* ask of God for the resurrection of her brother likewise, and that *if* He asked for it He would infallibly be heard. But she did not *believe* that He would ask for it; rather she shrinks back in fear before the greatness of God's gift, now that this gift steps forward before her.

Ver. 23, 24. "*Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*"

Does it not seem as if she were holding up her hand to shade her weak eyes, lest they should be blinded by the brightness of God's glory suddenly shining in upon them? Yes, and more than *that*. By her "*I know,*" she seems to make somewhat light of the word of consolation which the Lord had spoken to her, as if she needed no prophet to comfort her with the resurrection *at the last day*. But *this* she did *not* know—that the same voice which will penetrate into the graves at the last day was then offering her on that very day to manifest forth its power. Martha's troubled soul fluctuates with alternating emotions. Like a tempest-tossed bark, her spirit at one moment seems to bound upwards towards heaven, the next sees it well-nigh engulfed. But at length a calm ensues, and the conflict is over.

My reader, does not experience enable thee to understand

Martha? Behold, in the hour of affliction, into the depths of thy misery the word of comfort was sent, telling thee that thy sorrow should turn to the glory of the Lord thy God. But help was delayed, and what with horror thou sawest approaching, actually came to pass. Ah! it would not have happened if the Lord had chosen to prevent it! Thus thou complainest; but immediately thou refusest the murmurings that arise within thee, and forcest thy soul to humble itself under the mighty hand of God, acknowledging that this hand is even now unshortened, able still to help and to save. And yet, what thou *knowest* to be true out of God's own certain word—that word to which thou wouldest fain not be disobedient—is not powerful enough in thee to inspire thee with joyful confidence. “I will deliver thee and bring thee to honour,” thus speaks the Lord that has pity on thee, “I will deliver thee in a little while, I will help thee right early. Fear not, I am with thee in trouble; be not dismayed, for I *am* thy God. With long life will I satisfy thee, and show thee my salvation.” But all such words of promise thou explainest in such a manner that to thee they cannot fully unfold their consoling power; the God who is infinitely near to thee thou removest away far off, and allowest thyself only mere drops of comfort; whereas He would fain give thee out of His fulness rivers of grace. In short, thou believest, but thou art not perfect in thy belief. Thou dost not by faith possess (Heb. xi. 1), as already present, that which is held forth to thy hope as about to come. Therefore thou dost not find thyself able to grasp the glory which would fain be revealed in thee; it seems to thee to be too glorious.

Hear how the Lord calls back His handmaiden, wandering away to the far-off distance, to the judgment-day, and leads her into the consolation of a present life. At first it was: “Thy brother *shall* rise again;” and the word was designed to draw out Martha's faith, and to incite it to possess itself of the *how* and the *when*; but now He approaches quite close to her, and

speaks of the resurrection itself as the mighty evidence of that life which in Himself was even now at her side.

Ver. 25, 26. "*Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*"

What thou art expecting as a future event, Martha, at the last day, encompasses thy brother and *thyself* at this very hour as a present condition. Only not alone the grave of the beloved one, but first of all *me—me* must thou contemplate—*me* by whom he is loved. I *AM the Resurrection and the Life!*

Christ is the *Resurrection* because He is the *Life*. He has life originally in Himself; His essence is Life; in His victorious conflict with that Death which in our flesh He has power to taste for us (Heb. ii. 9), Life shows itself as Resurrection. "The Living" (Luke xxiv. 5) the angel-youth calls Him in his Easter announcement. Not because He has risen is He the Living, but because He is the Living therefore has He risen. It was *impossible* that He should be holden of death, for the very reason that He is the Living. And what Christ is, this He imparts to His believers (chap. xiv. 19). "He is the Resurrection of the dying and the life of the Living." (Bengel.) *Believers shall rise because they live.* Lazarus had *died*, but he only *slept*; his friendship with Jesus—his faith—made him *live*: "*He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*" Through faith in Him who is *the Life*, the Christian possesses an indefeasible life—a life which, even in the midst of dying, is not to be killed by death (chap. v. 24); and by virtue of faith in Him who is *the Resurrection*, even the mortal body of a Christian shall become glorified into the incorruptible Life which pertains to the body of the Resurrection.

For all His believers is this precious word of Christ intended. Just as His sleeping friend there in the grave, although—in the language of earth—he was dead, had nevertheless not fallen away from eternal life; so in like manner, all who (like Martha

and Mary) live the life which they now live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, shall *never die*, although they may be called dead: "*And whosoever liveth and—just therefore liveth because he—believeth in Me, shall never die.*" Through faith in Him who is the Life, our life in this mortal body is glorified into *that* life which shall never see death eternally (chap. viii. 51).

"Who shall be able to match together this that is said: Death is no death, but life. Moses says the contrary. For if thou dost hearken to the Law, it tells thee, as the old Christian song says, 'In the midst of life we are in death.' But this is only a law-song; the Gospel and faith reverse the song and sing: 'In the midst of death we are in life;' we praise Thee, blessed Lord God, our Redeemer, that thou hast awakened us out of death, and hast saved us." (Luther.)

Surely, if the life and the resurrection had been powerfully present in Martha, her brother would not have been dead to *her*, although he had been laid in the grave. Accordingly, pressing home into the innermost recesses of her soul, the Lord asks, "*Believest thou THIS?*" For thyself as well as for thy brother? Believest thou *this*, that virtually the resurrection of the last day is even now present for all whom I love, because I—not shall be, but *am* the Resurrection and the Life? Martha gives the answer of the ready obedience of faith.

Ver. 27. "*She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*"

Yea, Lord, I believe this that thou sayest of thyself; for I have believed, and do believe, that thou art *Christ, the Son of God*, which *should come into the world*. In this confession she sums up all that Jesus is to her faith: the promised Messiah who should come into the world, and who actually is come as the Son of God. Just as Peter embodied his faith in the Lord's mysterious words concerning the participation of His flesh and blood, in the confession, "Thou hast the words of eternal life,

and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God:" so Martha embraces the mystery of the life-full words of Christ, by confessing her faith in Him as the Son of God. Of this one thing she is sure, and this one thing is a security to her for the truth of *all* the words of Christ, of those even whose power she has not yet experienced. In Christ she is sure of *that* life which death had not been able to take away from her deceased brother, and so her heart enlarges itself to receive over and above the gift also of his awakened bodily life. "That which by God's manifold drawings had been made sure to her inmost heart, viz., that He was Christ, the Son of God, she now offers as a good holdfast, by which the Lord might grasp her securely to Himself, so that the deficiency of her comprehension of His meaning should not prevent her realising the blessing which His words imported." (Rieger.) Thus even the weakest faith lays hold on the whole of Christ: in the grain of seed received in the soil there is already comprised the sum of that life which will spring from it. And whosoever hath, to him shall be given, that he may have abundance.

The Awakening of Lazarus.

CHAPTER XI. 1-45.

II. SAID I NOT UNTO THEE, THAT IF THOU Wouldest BELIEVE THOU SHOULDEST SEE THE GLORY OF GOD?—VER. 28-45.

Grant us, O Lord, to know Thy glory, which Thou hast revealed through Thy word, and to look forward in faith to the time when Thou wilt permit us to behold Thy glory face to face. Amen.

THE sweet, consoling light which was shining upon Martha's soul from the Lord's marvellous discourse concerning "Dying and yet Living," she hastened to impart to her sister Mary. Yes, she hoped, no doubt, that Mary would help her fully to believe in the word of their beloved Master; for she was accustomed to the helping hand of this docile pupil of the word. Therefore, whilst to the Lord's question, "Believest thou this?" she answers in her own name: "Yea, Lord, *I* (in the original Greek the *I* stands with marked emphasis) have believed and still believe that thou art Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world," she yet searches her sister's heart for a brighter *yea* of faith than she herself had.

Ver. 28. "*And when she had so said, she went her way and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come and calleth for thee.*"

Only for disciples' ears was the Gospel intended which Martha had just heard from the Master's mouth—that she knew quite well; therefore she called her sister *secretly*, and said, "*The Master is come*"—verily, a Master mighty to save—"and

calleth for thee." What the Master had been saying to *her* struck Martha as a *call* to her sister.

How beautiful this is! When thy Saviour has been offering Himself to thee to be thy Consolation and Light, thy Resurrection and Life, go thy way, call thy brothers and sisters who, like thee, are in need of help, but *secretly*—the world might trample on such pearls—and say, "The Master is come, *and calleth for thee.*"

Ver. 29-31. "*As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. The Jews therefore which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she arose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.*"

Mary hastens, and finds the Lord where she seeks Him, near the grave; for to-day His resting-place is not, as it used to be, in the town. Many times during these four days had Mary gone this way; and the Jews followed her to quiet her tears with comfortless consolations. But now the real Comforter was at hand.

Ver. 32. "*Then when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!*"

The first word with which she greets Jesus is the same with which Martha met Him also; but she is lying in adoration at *His feet* while she thus speaks. In *her* mouth this utterance of anguish contains not even the shadow of a reproof, but points only to the tears which Jesus (she is sure) had shed with them, and is a reverential confession rendered to the Living One before whom death flies (ver. 15)—to the loving Saviour who calls him whom Mary with grief names "*my brother,*" *His* friend (ver. 11). Whilst Martha felt the need of adding something further in order for her heart to regain its right posture towards the Lord, Mary has nothing more to say, but is silent and weeps.

Ver. 33-35. "*When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned [He was wroth—Greek] in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.*"

Jesus *was wroth*—Jesus *wept*. In these two words there lies a treasure of holy love, of which we should use every endeavour to become partakers. When the Lord saw Mary *weeping* at his feet, and all around him *weeping* also, He *was wroth in spirit*. Whereat? Against whom is his anger directed? Answer: Against *Death*, which was wringing out these tears, against the enemy of Life and his dark power. The devil was mocking the Son of God. "Ay, come and see, I have brought all this to pass! To my power belong men, the children of death, even Thy friends, and *Thou Thyself*, O Son of Man!" This language Jesus heard, and He *was wroth in spirit*: the offended Life of the Godhead dwelling within Him, in holy wrath was menacing him who had the power of death; and since, at the same time, He allowed His altogether human, brotherly heart to be penetrated with sorrow for human misery, *He was troubled*, or, as it is literally, *He troubled Himself*; *He was* troubled, because he had power by sympathy to plunge into the sorrows of His brethren. (It was the same afterwards when he said, "Now is my soul troubled;" and in Gethsemane, where His soul was troubled, even unto death, and He began to be sorrowful, to tremble, and to be dismayed.)

So, then, Death raises first of all the wrathful *anger* of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

Christians likewise are authorized and called upon to feel this holy wrath of their Lord against the loathsome enemy of life. True, they are sinners, and death has a rightful claim over their sinful, worthless body; yet, in faith they have also the first fruits of the *Spirit* which quickens, and they may be angry in the *spirit* against the last enemy that shall be destroyed.

Hast thou never yet seen one die, and wrestle with the destroy-

ing angel or death? I have often seen the sight. On each occasion, as the cold power of death shook, and at last overpowered the beloved body of a beloved soul, or when, from a coffin, the hideous mask of death has glared at me, I have always been powerfully reminded of the word, "Then Jesus was *wroth* in spirit."

But, sayest thou, if then those whom death has taken away are *Christians*—sleeping friends of Jesus—whose life is hidden for ever in the Hand of God, should one be wroth with Death, who comes as a wished-for servant to accomplish their desire to depart? Now, was not this very Lazarus, at whose grave Jesus was wroth, His sleeping friend? Let us rejoice in the life which, undestroyed, embraces those who die in the Lord, and in which they are blessed from the moment of their departure (Rev. xiv. 13); let us also rejoice in the life whose imperishable seed germinates under the corpse-veil of a body of death; but yet Death himself, and his work on the body even of saints, often in *their* case performed with the most violent rage, is not for our love and delight, but for our hatred and sorrow. St. Paul sighed to be released from the frail earthly tabernacle of his body, and earnestly desired to be clothed upon with the heavenly body which was prepared for him, "*if so be*—he adds—that we may be *clothed* and not be found *naked*; for we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be *unclothed*, but *clothed upon*, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." A low estimation of the body is far removed from the teaching of the Scripture.* St. Paul combats most strongly the heresy of those who maintained that the resurrection was

* Beautifully and scripturally does *Tertullian* extol the "flesh" of the resurrection against the despisers of the flesh, who at the same time are unholy lovers of it, in his excellent work, *De Resurrectione Carnis*. "Thou dost read in Scripture," he says, "how the flesh is obscured and darkened; but now, open thine eyes, and read how gloriously bright it is made! God is good: what He commands He Himself does, and therefore loving His neighbour. Therefore He will indeed love the flesh which, in Christ, has become His neighbour."

past already, thus denying the resurrection of the flesh (2 Tim. ii. 18); and the unclothed souls of departed saints look forward with earnest expectation for the joyful day when they shall be clothed upon. Let us not be content with less than the Lord has promised us: perfect satisfaction in the bodily life of the resurrection. "I venture to say—exclaims *Tertullian*—that the gracious power of God would be brought to nought if His salvation extended not to the flesh!"

Well, indeed, may we be of good heart when we come to die, neither should we sorrow, as those who have no hope, over the graves of our sleeping ones; for the bodies of believers wait for the manifestation of the Glory of God: nevertheless, it is fitting that we should mourn in a Christian way—viz., *in the spirit*. Our blessed Lord Jesus has sanctified the tears of sorrow which we shed for our departed friends; for as if He were chiding Death, who had turned the body of His friend into a corpse, He said, with an expression of anger, "*Where have ye laid him?*" and when, in the brief words of sorrow, they answer, "*Lord, come and see*"—which, to St. John, was no doubt a sad reminder of the very first word which he had ever heard his Lord utter—then *Jesus wept*—burst into tears. He was not ashamed of *tears*, even though He was on his way to the grave as an Awakener of the dead. Christians, following the corpse of their beloved ones to the grave, may plead before Him those tears of His, if ever the thought springs up that it is according to man and not according to God to weep bitterly; these precious tears of *His* utter a distinct, "Check them not?" to every thought which would condemn *our* tears as being unworthy of Christians.

Even the holy Paul did not hesitate to acknowledge the mercy of God in preserving the life of Epaphroditus, who was sick unto death, "lest—he says—I should have sorrow upon sorrow" (Phil. ii. 27). The *sufferings* of death and the *sorrow* of death, our Saviour has tasted both alike. Be thy weeping however bitter, thy pain is to Him also a pain. With this let

us comfort ourselves as long as we have to experience the truth of what the hymn says :—

“The world, it is a vale of woe,
Pain and distress where'er we go.”

And let us firmly fix our eyes upon the end for which we are waiting, the manifestation of the New Jerusalem, when the tears of Jesus' friends will be for ever dried, for He “shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, for the former things are passed away.”

Ver. 36, 37. “*Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?*”

The former were pleased to observe the close bond of love existing betwixt Jesus and him that was dead, whom they also had loved; and if they did not fully understand His tears (which concerned not Lazarus alone, but every man whom Jesus loves and whom death assails), they yet put a favourable construction upon them.

But some sucked poison from His tears. “He opened the eyes of the blind man, and now He weeps because this His intimate friend is dead! How? Was this sickness beyond His power to heal? Or was He better pleased to be in Perea with those in health than in Bethany with the sick man? What a Master and Friend you two poor sisters have in Him!” Such is their thought. They represent, in this richly typical history, the thoughts of temptation which in hours of great sorrow the evil spirit tries to suggest, while he brings up to us our present grief which God has not spared us from feeling, and through that would fain make us doubt concerning mercies received before and concerning God's unchanging goodness. “Could not thy Almighty God have caused that this man should not have died?” Oh, we know it well, this language of derision! “In the Lord put I my trust. How say ye then to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? For lo,

the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart" (Ps. xi. 1, 2).

Ver. 38, 39. *Jesus therefore again groaning* [literally, being wroth] *in Himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days."*

He was wroth with His foul adversary who had hurried Lazarus away, in order that by the mouth of unbelievers he might be able to revile the name of Jesus. The corpse lay in the back part of this burial-cave, covered by a stone which was placed before it. Jesus entered the outer part of the cave, and proceeded as far as the stone which concealed from Him the face of the corpse, and he said, "*Take ye away the stone!*" This is the beginning of his answer to what the Jews had said.

"All God's works are wont to have a small beginning. Behold, He who was about to raise the dead commanded the stone to be taken away, as if He could not remove it by this same power of His word, or make the dead look out alive through the stone! Why, then, does He perform the greater thing, the awakening from death, whilst He leaves undone the smaller thing, as also afterwards the loosing of the grave clothes? Now, this is the order in which He still works His wonders. Daily He nourishes us through His almighty word, but He encloses the sustaining power in the bread which we eat. By the word of the Lord the plants and fruits grow, yet He commands to plough and to sow, to plant and to water." (Brenz.)

If we do what we can, He does what we cannot. His kindness does not permit us to be idle spectators of His works, but earnest helpers of them. Even in the work of raising sinners from spiritual death, He makes use of human hands which "take away the stone," and afterwards "loose" the grave-clothes the act of quickening to life,—this He reserves for Himself; *His* voice must do *that*.

It was, no doubt, with intense excitement of mingled awe and joy that the disciples (John especially) and *Mary* heard the word: "Take ye away the stone!"—they had a presentiment that it would not be placed again before the corpse. But *Martha* here at the grave speaks more as the *sister of the deceased* than as the disciple of the Living. She would fain spare both herself and her Master the sight of the corruption which has already fastened upon the beloved corpse, and so she opposes the removal of the stone by the word: "*Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days!*"

When Luther received the divine call: "Take away the stone!" the body of the Church had already lain more than 400 years in the Romish grave, and more than one faint-hearted *Martha* shrank from the smell of corruption which was being wafted by the stone-removing Reformation; but Luther's faith prospered unto the seeing of the Glory of God. And *we*, if we would believe, should then know by real experience that the fragrance of incorruptible Life, which goes forth from the Head of the Church, is powerful enough to overcome the corruption which Death is working in her members. Before every Lazarus-grave of Jesus' beloved Church the Glory of the Lord stands ready to reveal itself.

Ver. 40. "*Jesus saith unto her: Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?*"

Martha is called away from that which she perceives with her earthly senses,—from death and corruption, to that which the Lord has *said* to her,—to life and resurrection. The *word* which He had spoken concerning "Living" and "Rising again" ought to have greater weight with her than the *sight* of death and the *smell* of corruption; by faith in the word of life she ought to look *through* the revolting image of death, and see beyond the Glory of God. All that the Lord had said to her through His first message (ver. 4), He now sums up in this one word: "If thou wouldst *believe*, thou shouldst *see the Glory of God*"—the Glory of God which had appeared in the *Son of God*

who is the Resurrection and the Life, and which was being revealed in His *believers* (ver. 25, 26). The Lord's question : "Believest thou this?" Martha had answered with a *Yea* ; if only this *Yea* to His word would wake up again in her heart, then she might meet the doubting thoughts suggested by the smell of the grave's corruption with a fearless *No* : "no, not unto death, but for the Glory of God !—my brother shall rise again !—I shall see the Glory of God !" And Martha, in fact, did really surrender herself to the Lord's word. She is silent, and no longer opposes the removal of the stone, for she is beginning to believe that this stone covers one not undergoing corruption only, but one who is also rising again.

Precious let that word be to us also : "*Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldst see the Glory of God ?*" The more condescending and gentle it is, the more keenly should it shame us and rebuke our unbelief. "*Said I not unto thee ?*"—thus it is that the Lord recalls His precious promises to our recollection whenever we forget them. He reminds us of our promise, alas ! how often made to Him : "Yea, Lord, I believe," and calls upon us to trust Him *in all things*, to lay hold of His living word, and therewith to ward off every attack which could deprive us of the Glory of God, which is so ready to be revealed upon us. Yes, every objection which our reason raises against the workings of His victorious life, He meets with a : "*Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe ?*" and in this way He fetches back the soul, grovelling in what is earthly and visible, and causes her to ascend upwards upon the path of faith—that faith whereby she is assured of what is heavenly and invisible, whereby she doubts not of that which she sees not, but hopes at length, even with her bodily eyes to see it. All who sincerely pray, "Thy Kingdom come ;" all parents who have the conversion and preservation of their children at heart ; all members of the Church, and of each separate congregation, who earnestly desire the manifestation of Jesus Christ through the Gospel as the Prince of Life, both in His people and amongst

the heathen ; in short, all who with Moses, the man of God, long to behold the Glory of God (Ex. xxxiii. 18), and pray with him : "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy Glory unto their children" (Ps. xc. 16)—all these know, by bitter experience, of dark hours such as this one in which Martha says : "Lord, by this time he stinketh ;" but they know, by blessed experience likewise, of such hours of refreshing as this in which Martha inwardly hearkens to the Lord's word : "*Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the Glory of God,*" and in which she takes away from her own heart the stone of unbelief which keeps back the revelation of God's Glory.

Ver. 41, 42. "*Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always, but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*"

Forth from this thanksgiving, by which the Lord prefaces His resurrection-word, there streams a bright light upon the discourse upon which He commenced this glorious history, when He said, that not unto death was that sickness, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. The Son of God, when He said this, was even then engaged in doing what He saw the Father do (chap. v. 19) ; and when on His way to Bethany He declared : "I go that *I* may awake him," He knew assuredly that He was not going *alone*, but *He and the Father* (chap. viii. 16) ; for it was for the glory of the Father who sent Him that He desired to reveal His own glory as the Son. Of the brightness of this glory, which for ever belonged to Him as His own, He had emptied Himself, when He took the *form of a servant*, and was found in fashion as a *man*, and in this, His state of humiliation, He accepted every *revelation* of His glory as an *answer to prayer*. But yet different from the prayers and the answers to prayer of the children of God were

the prayers and answers to prayer of the only-begotten Son of God in the days of the flesh. "*I know that thou hearest me always,*" He says. Therefore every *prayer* of His includes also a *thanksgiving* that it is heard. The Son, in whom the Father is well pleased, always knows and prays what is well-pleasing to the Father; in praying, the Son ever seeks the glory of the Father, and always answering the Father seeks the glory of the Son (chap. viii. 50). It is as *Rieger* says: "The Saviour truly worked all His miracles in *faith*, but in the faith which was *peculiarly His own*, namely, that He was the Son of God manifest in the flesh, and, for the confirmation of this truth, exhibited for the faith of others." The silent prayer and thanksgiving with which the Son accompanied all His works through which the Father testified of Him, breaks forth here by the grave of Lazarus, into a public and open *confession* (after the manner of *Elijah*, 1 Kings xviii. 37.) The people which stood around were to direct their eyes upwards towards the true God, and to believe that He, as the Father, had sent the Son and heard Him always, in order to reveal in Him the glory of His saving life: *therefore* it was that on this occasion Jesus lifted up His eyes and spoke out aloud the sentiment which then, as always, was moving in His heart. Comp. chap. xii. 30, and also xvii. 1.

Ver. 43. "*And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*"

He calls him by name, as one would a *sleeping* man. And behold, before the loud voice of the Son of God (chap. v. 28), of Him who quickens the dead and calls that which is not as though it were (Rom. iv. 17), Death starts back affrighted, he feels the *wrath* of the One who is stronger than he, and he lets his prey go; while on the other hand, the soul of the dead man immediately hearkens to the well-known voice of her Creator and Redeemer, and returns to take possession of her body, which had been for four days a corpse. The ancient Church used to sing respecting the resurrection at the last day:—

"Then the trumpet's thrilling tone,
Through the tombs of ages gone,
Summons all before the throne.

"Death and time shall stand aghast,
And Creation, at the blast,
Rise to answer for the past."

That it will be thus is guaranteed to us by the *loud voice* (Rev. vii. 2) of that glorious and terrible utterance, "*Lazarus, come forth.*" Blessed are the dead who in this mighty voice shall recognise, as Lazarus did, the voice of the Friend who loves them, for at that hour His summons shall reunite their body and their soul; Death and Corruption He shall scare away from their grave; whilst themselves He shall "satisfy," as the Psalmist speaks, with a joyful Resurrection and with eternal Life.

Ver. 44. *And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go!*"

In the array of death comes he forth who is summoned back into life! That which upon the body of the rising Saviour was done in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb by angel-hands, is here to be performed by men. The Lord graciously stoops to those who have been struck by the splendour of His glory, and reassures them. Fear not! it is no spectre ye see, but Lazarus himself! *Loose him*, that he may see Me, for fain would he come to Me, and then *let him go*, leave him with Me alone!

This is a blessed work which the Lord permits us to do, that of loosing the grave-clothes and napkins of His awakened ones. There we see coming forth an awakened sinner out of the grave of his death, but still bound hands and feet, and his face veiled; fain would he walk with new and certain steps; fain would he see with a new and certain eye; but the remains of the grave which still hang about him hinder his feet from walking and his eye from seeing. *Loose him*—help to set him up right with your own experience; show him out of God's

word the right way to peace; and then *let him go*, with no round-about course, with no delay, but straight to the Lord Jesus; leave him alone with his Awakener; disturb him not, embarrass him not in his intercourse with God through leading-strings of human invention, whereby he must walk—let him go!

Ver. 45. "*Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him.*"

"They had come as the merciful, and they obtained mercy." (Lampe.) It is like St. John, that he only describes the impression which the miracle made on the *strangers*, who, by seeing aright and *believing*, fulfilled the longing which the Lord had expressed in His prayer (ver. 42); whilst of Mary and Martha and Lazarus themselves He says nothing. What these three experienced on this glorious day was indeed beyond describing. The gladness, the rapture of Mary and Martha we may in some degree imagine; but no one can adequately represent it to us. Only a slight indication is given to us that it was *Mary* who received the glory of the Lord which she had beheld, the *most* deeply into her heart, by *her* being named as the friend of the now believing Jews,—*the Jews who came to MARY*. The anointing which followed very shortly after, and which on that account is alluded to by St. John beforehand (ver. 2), shows plainly that from this time Mary's heart was fully tuned to the spirit of entire self-devotion and most grateful love. If this pound of ointment of genuine and precious spikenard (chap. xii. 3) was, as ancient expositors have conjectured, originally intended for the anointing of her dead brother, it savours all the stronger of a thank-offering love, and is all the more suitable to prepare the body of Him who raised up Lazarus, for the burial which so soon awaited it.

The Prophecy of Caiaphas.

CHAPTER XI. 46-57.

O Lord, who awakenest the dead, and for us dost die, grant us to know the might of Thy love. Amen.

THE raising of Lazarus is immediately followed by the Jews adopting the resolution to put Jesus to death. "*Ye have killed the Prince of Life!*" thus testifies the glory of God which was manifested at Lazarus' grave, and which guaranteed beforehand the resurrection of Him who is Himself the Resurrection and the Life. But it was by the contemplation of that glory that John strengthened himself to relate that history of our Lord's Passion which now commences; and *we* likewise must never forget that that Lamb of God, suffering and bleeding for us, has *power* to lay down His life that He may take it again; for we have seen that, before His mighty wrath, Death gives way and is no more. Christ dies—not that the Jews had power to kill Him, but because He has power to have Himself killed; He dies—because, according to the Father's will, He *is to* die, and because, with His will as Son, He *will* die, drinking the cup which *the Father* has given Him. The hidden counsel of His saving death, the Almighty hand of God constrains the mouth of Caiaphas, the High Priest, to reveal; Caiaphas thus becoming an involuntary witness of the true Sacrifice, in which all the sacrifices offered by his predecessors in the priesthood were to find their end and fulfilment. Such is the substance of what we are now going to read.

Ver. 46. "*But some of them (the Jews) went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.*"

These must have been the same who before had made those invidious remarks upon Jesus' tears (ver. 37). Are we to say that they saw nothing at all of the glory of God displayed at the grave of the reawakened Lazarus? They had indeed seen it, but they had not *contemplated* (like the others, ver. 45) that which was held up to the view of faith. The excommunication with which all who confessed Christ were threatened, influenced them more powerfully than Christ's work alluring them to believe; and for the very purpose of clearing themselves from the suspicion of having been at Bethany in the capacity of disciples of Jesus, they went their way to the Pharisees, who were as a "spread-out net" (Hosea v. 1), and told them what Jesus had done. More appalling even than in the people, for whom it may be said that *they* were kept down by the power of man, appears in their rulers that "savour of death unto death" (2 Cor. ii. 16) which ever goes forth from the Word of Life in respect to all such as will not believe.

Ver. 47, 48. "*Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let Him thus alone all men will believe on Him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.*"

"*What do we?*" Alas! if only this question had been: "What must we do to be saved?" But like all ungodly men, they are, as Augustine says, more active in devising ways to *cause* destruction than to *escape* destruction. "*What do we?*" — *this man doeth many miracles!*" What a fearful antithesis is here! The *many miracles* of Jesus pressed upon them as a burden (chap. x. 32). Because in wilful blindness they had rejected all His former miracles, therefore they remained unblest and unawakened by this last and most glorious miracle (chap. ix. 39); the Glory of God which there shone forth from "*this man,*" brought them no light, no joy. "*Death gives way be-*

fore Christ's word of power sooner than *unbelief* does." (Bengel.) As if it rested with them to forbid the Sun to continue His Light they do not choose to *let Him thus alone*; they hypocritically clothe their envy in the patriotic apprehension, lest this unheard of Wonder-worker should be proclaimed by the people King of Israel, and should simply throw the land and people, the holy land and the holy people, into the hands of the Romans; "for no son of David, no hero to assert his power was *he!*" It is deserving of remark that when, forty years after, Jerusalem, stained with the murder of Jesus, fell under the avenging sword which God gave into the hand of the Romans, those only escaped destruction who believed in Christ.

Ver. 49, 50. "*And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*"

The Sanhedrim were not immediately agreed upon the measures that were to be adopted to prevent Jesus from thus going on. Amongst its members were, we must recollect, men also like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Gamaliel. These would venture even now to maintain Jesus' innocence, and to oppose their fellow-rulers who wanted to put the hated Nazarene out of the way. Thus even to the end did the long-suffering of God encompass those miserable servants of sin and the devil with voices calling to repentance and with smittings of conscience. As then their deliberations swayed hither and thither, and seemed likely to come to no conclusion, *Caiaphas* took up the word,—a man whose worldliness of mind was now become wholly insensible to the Hand of God, powerfully as it was then touching him. Nevertheless St. John sees in *Caiaphas*, not merely the worldly minded Sadducee, but also, and indeed chiefly, the *High Priest* whom this year found in office, taken out of the house of Aaron. A year such as this, Israel—ay, even the world, had never seen; and in devout remembrance of this year of all grace, St. John twice writes, "*who was high*

priest that same year." If Caiaphas had been a true Israelite and a genuine son of Aaron, he would, like Simeon, have praised God that his eyes had beheld the real High Priest, who as God's own Lamb, had appeared as the Sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people. But Caiaphas felt no guilt of sin and longed for no atonement. And since it was so, unwittingly and unwillingly he was on this day to do what belonged to his office, which was to pronounce the blessing, and, as the High Priest of this year, to testify concerning the High Priestly Sacrifice which, offered up in this year, avails for eternity. In his own view, he was merely uttering words which were calculated to beat down any feelings which the members of the Sanhedrim harboured in respect to putting Jesus to death, while he represented this "One man," whether guilty of death or not, as a sacrifice which it was politically expedient to immolate in order to avert the destruction with which the whole people were threatened by the Romans. But while he spoke, the Holy Ghost made use of his unholy lips (as of sounding brass, the ancients say) in order pathetically to disclose the high purpose which Heaven had formed for the redemption of the world. Israel once, when on the threshold of the promised land, was blessed by the prophetic words of Baalam: that prophet was himself inclined to curse, but the might of the Lord overpowered him, and put words in his mouth which confirmed the promise made to the patriarchs and renewed through Moses, whereby there was consigned and made over to the people a rich and glorious inheritance (Numb. xxiii., xxiv.): so here, in like manner, Caiaphas, who fain would curse, is constrained, as a second Balaam, on the threshold of the new dispensation, to utter a blessing over the true Israel, by confirming the predictions which the Law and the Prophets had spoken concerning the propitiating death of the Lamb of God.

Ver. 51, 52. "*And this spake he, not of himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that also He should*

gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

If Caiaphas had spoken *of himself*, as the Sadducean Caiaphas, and not rather as *the high priest of that year*, by the secret guidance of the Holy Ghost, he would have expressed his meaning differently; and, in particular, he would not have made use of the precious word—a word consecrated to denote the sacrificial death of Christ:—"to die for that nation." The gift of prophecy, which the predecessors of Caiaphas had formerly exercised through "the Light and Right"—the Urim and the Thummim (Ex. xxviii. 30)—had been long extinguished, but it was once more to light up in the high priest of *this year*, in order that from Moses' seat, the one true offering for sin might be set forth before the eyes of the people. "Caiaphas and Pilate condemned Jesus, but both were constrained to testify of Him in words whose meaning went far beyond what they themselves were aware of; here, Caiaphas of the *high-priestly* death of Christ, there, Pilate, in the superscription on the cross, of His *kingly power*." (Bengel.)

Jesus *should* die for the nation, St. John says: this was from the beginning God's purpose of love, for that He gave His only begotten Son; and not for the *people of Israel* alone, but for those which once were not a *people*, but who were now to become the *people of God*. Such was to be the fruit of the Sacrifice of Jesus, *that he should gather together the scattered children of God* into one people under one Lord, into one flock under one Shepherd, into one body under one Head in one Spirit. We have already expatiated upon this precious saying concerning the Church, in chap. x. 16. As there the Lord calls those who are to be gathered into His Church from the heathen His *sheep* which He *has*, so here, the Evangelist calls those who, since the building of the tower of Babel have been scattered abroad into all lands, but who were to be brought into one Church through the gospel of the crucified Christ, the *children of God*. Because the Lamb of

God, who bears the sin of the *world*, should die for the propitiation of the sins of the *whole* world, therefore St. John contemplates the sonship with God of all the redeemed as already existing, though it had still to be realized by their as yet future faith. He is assured that the blood of Christ was not shed in vain ; and as, at the time when he wrote these words, a great number of those who had been scattered abroad were gathered into the company of God's children, he therefore reads in the Heart of God the names of many more besides—scattered ones as yet, but already *there*, with the name of children ; with eyes of spiritual insight the inspired Apostle views that holy missionary movement which should take in, in process of time, the whole of the reconciled world,—a movement which will not cease until all are gathered together whom the Father has given to the Son. Then the glorious prophecy will have its entire fulfilment: “For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him *with one consent*. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering” (Zeph. iii. 9, 10). Then will God's gracious wisdom have restored what man's sinful folly has destroyed. Instead of the tower of Babel, from which commenced the dispersion, there will stand, resplendent with glory, the holy city of God, built for an habitation of God in the Spirit, viz.: the Temple of the body of Jesus Christ, unto which all the stones of God which are scattered abroad shall be builded together into One. Instead of the Temple at Jerusalem, in the guardianship of which the Sanhedrim so greatly boasted, the true Temple of God will be built, reared upon Christ, the precious Corner-stone, out of the living stones which are his members ; a Temple which will unite in itself all nations of the earth, constituting the true Israel (Rev. xxi. 12) ; in earnest of which the Pentecost assembly was heard, praising the wonderful works of God in every tongue. “Thus, far from Christ bringing ruin upon His people,

as the Pharisees alleged, He had added to the people of God those which were no people." (Bengel.)

Looked at from St. John's point of view, this council, convened by the enemies of God against His dear Son, has something truly edifying in it ; it is a worthy commencement of the history of the Passion, in which the will of God's love that Jesus *should* die for the nation, and for the whole world, through the constrained co-operation forced out of the children of wickedness, was in all its details fulfilled. Therefore we ought not to fix our eyes only on Caiaphas, or the other members of this assembled council ; but, led by the hand of the Holy Ghost, and instructed through the Evangelist, we should reflect how, in the wonderful council of the Holy Trinity, there met together the justice, the mercy, the wisdom, the omnipotence, and the truth of God, in order to take counsel concerning the punishment or pardon of fallen man. Justice spake : " He must be punished ; " Mercy : " He must be acquitted." At length the wisdom of Divine love settled the strife, and thus spake : "*It is better that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*" But this *one man* is *the man Christ Jesus*, the only Mediator between God and man, because He was from eternity God, and became man that He might give Himself a ransom for all (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6).

Ver. 53. "*Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death.*"

They had long *sought* to kill Him (chap. vii. 19) ; but from that day, when in their assembly, Caiaphas, with cold and heartless determination within, and with sanctimonious zeal for his country's welfare without, struck the decisive blow, their determination was thenceforward fixed ; and much beholden to their high priest they might have accounted themselves for presenting them with so effectual a narcotic to dull the remorse of their consciences. But their counselling and resolving would have been all in vain if the hour when Jesus *should* and *would* die for the people had not arrived.

Ver. 54. "*Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued.*" [According to Luther: "*Occupied Himself*] *with his disciples.*"

The raising up of Lazarus had been done *openly*; therein, because His hour was now come, the Lord had done what, at the Feast of Tabernacles, His brethren had, out of season, desired Him to do: He had manifested His glory to the world (chap. vii. 4), and thereby the world's hatred was already arming itself for its last assault upon Him whose glory it did not know. But it was not till the Feast of the Passover that the hour was to come which He had so often spoken of as *His hour*, when, as the true Paschal Lamb, He should die for the people. Therefore He once more withdrew Himself for a little space from the schemings of His enemies, and continued with His disciples, till His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, in the little town of Ephrem, on the borders of the wilderness of Judea. To the disciples, this journey of the Lord to the insignificant little town just at this time, when they had been beholding the bright splendour of His glory in Bethany, must no doubt have appeared very incomprehensible. The expression of the Evangelist: "*He there occupied Himself,*" intimates that even in Ephrem His watchword still was: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day." The especial object, however, of His working during these last days was His disciples, for them "He loved unto the end." It was from the retirement of Ephrem that He, in conjunction with them, went forth unto the decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Ver. 55, 56. "*And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?*"

All who according to the Levitical law were unclean, were obliged before the Passover to purify themselves (Numb.

ix. 6, 10) through the observance of a number of rites appointed for the purpose. With this custom, we may observe in passing, was connected the subsequent washing of the disciples' feet, recorded in the thirteenth chapter, which is again a beautiful type of the confession and absolution which, amongst ourselves [in Germany] precedes the Holy Supper. Those who went up to Jerusalem from the surrounding country this year to keep the Passover, had their minds so filled with the thought of the Man who had raised up Lazarus, that even before the Feast they missed Him, and in the Temple, in the midst of their purifying sacrifices, they exclaimed, one to another: "*What think ye? Will He, suppose ye, not come to the Feast?*" Has He become weary of "seeking the lost," as He so often spoke, and has He broken the shepherd's staff over Israel? They afterwards conducted Him in with shouts of Hosanna. Amongst them were a number of sheep, whom the Good Shepherd was, for His part, ready to deliver out of the hands of the thieves and murderers; and the aim and endeavour of the evil shepherds, who sought to drown the voice of the Good Shepherd in the ears of the people, appear all the more execrable, when we consider the willingness which the people evinced to receive its Saviour. The Chief Priests and Pharisees felt concerned lest Jesus had escaped them, and lest He would not come to the Feast.

Ver. 57. "*Now both the chief Priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where He were, he should show it, that they might take Him.*"

For all that He comes, comes of His own accord. That was not to be allowed to come to pass which His enemies were planning to effect, that they should bring Him by force to Jerusalem; instead of that, He was to *enter in triumph*, and that too as Zion's King, on Palm-Sunday. Caiaphas had *prophesied*, not said it of himself, that Jesus should die as a sacrifice for the nation; it was therefore fitting likewise that the slaying of the sacrificial Lamb should not take place according to plans formed

in the counsels of the Jews, but according to the foreordained counsel of God. "Not on the Feast-day," they afterwards said; but, nevertheless, the hour for the presenting of the Sacrifice, full of Grace and Truth, was ordained to be on the great Feast of deliverance (Matt. xxvi. 5).

Mary Anoints Jesus for His Burial.

CHAPTER XII. 1-8.

THE Feast of Passover was now near. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Paschal Lamb, had already presented Himself at the place of slaughter. He had now *finished* those powerful sermons of His, in which were contained all the words which as Prophet He was commissioned to speak to the people (Matt. xxvi. 1): now the time had come when He was to *finish* His high-priestly work. The rulers of the people were deliberating how they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill Him: thus they filled up the measure of their sins, whilst at the same time they carried out God's purpose of salvation. See how Almighty God rules in the midst of His enemies, so that they are constrained to serve Him even in their blindness and malice! *Of old*, Joseph's brethren took counsel how they might put him to death, and it was their malice that sold their brother to the Ishmaelites; but Scripture says, "*God* sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant" (Ps. cv. 17). What Joseph in his suffering did not foresee, *that* Jesus, our heavenly Joseph, knew; but yet He intreated not the Jews, His brethren after the flesh, to spare His life, but He gave Himself up for us. More than once had He warned His disciples that He was about to lay down His life. They were to know, and we too, that death did not take Him by surprise, that it did not seize upon Him against His will; no, the Son of God, resigned to His Father's will, and obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, with a strong volition of love exposed Himself to the power of darkness, and delivered Himself up into the hands of death. As

He says: "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father" (John x. 17, 18). Two days before the Feast, before His execution had been planned in the palace of the high priest, the Lord once more emphatically said: "*Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified*" (Matt. xxvi. 2). That the Passover was at hand the disciples knew; but they did not know that the true Passover, the eternal Deliverance, was now present before them in the blood of Jesus Christ, which was to be poured out upon the Cross. The *Passover* and the Passover *Lamb* are inseparable; and whilst the Sanhedrim said: "*Not on the feast day!*" it was determined in the highest Council: *Upon the feast day!* and there should be "*an uproar,*" a blessed commotion, raised amongst the people on Golgotha. This the Lord knows, and obedient even to the death of the Cross, He now moves on with unfaltering step. He does not fly from the Cross, for He *can* bear it, and He *will* bear it. Already, on the previous Saturday, when He was in Bethany, He spoke of His burial as being nigh at hand; for the Father, who delivered up His Son by determinate counsel and foreknowledge (Acts ii. 23), guided the hand of Mary, so that she was constrained to anoint the holy Body, which six days afterwards was to be laid in the grave a corpse.

Thus, then, we see why St. Matthew and St. Mark have inserted this narrative after the mention of the murderous council held by the high-priests and scribes and elders; in order, namely, to show that neither power nor subtilty would have taken life from the Lord Jesus, if He had not laid it down of Himself. St. John relates the narrative in its proper order; his chief object in inserting it being to allow us a glimpse into the heart of that disciple who from that hour became the betrayer of Jesus.

Ver. 1, 2. "*Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him.*"

The master of the feast, Simon (Matt. xxvi. 6; Mark xiv. 3), had probably been previously cured by the Lord of his leprosy. The surname which he bore was a constant reminder to him of the benefit he had received. And so St. Matthew calls himself the *Publican* (Matt. x. 8) for the same reason. Simon the leper prepared a feast for his Lord and Physician, and amongst the invited guests was also Lazarus, he who had been dead. Now he sits at table with Jesus who had raised him from the dead. O Lazarus, with what joy wouldst thou gaze upon Him who is the Resurrection and the Life! And with what rapture shall *we* behold Him, when, clothed in our glorified body, we shall for ever sit down with Him in His Father's kingdom!

Martha, although she was not the hostess, yet could not refrain from waiting at table. We well know what manner of person Martha was (Luke x. 40). But this time the Lord permits her service, and is even well pleased with it. Perhaps some such thought as this might have been read in her face: "Behold, Lord, I know that *Thou* lovest *me* without care or trouble of mine; but deny me not to-day the joy of pouring out in this my service *my* poor love to *Thee*."

Ver. 3. "*Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.*"

Martha's sister, Mary, had perhaps been sitting for a time at the feet of Jesus, listening to His words. She contemplated in His holy countenance the glory of God (chap. xi. 40.) At length her love runs over; she can no longer restrain herself; the utmost that body and soul can do she will lay out in her Saviour's service and for His honour. Truly, Mary's sacrifice

was a whole burnt-offering ; for under the figure of the ointment she offers up her soul. If the ointment had been originally intended to anoint the dead body of her brother, she was now presenting it as a thank-offering to Him who had raised her brother to life. All too slowly for her did the spikenard trickle through the glass's narrow mouth ; therefore she must break the glass. And as from the broken vessel the precious ointment flowed freely, filling the house with its delicious odour, so her heart, too, was broken ; for it was not large enough to contain within itself the fulness of her Lord's love to her, and the sweet savour of her answering love was gushing forth in return. "While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof" (Cant. i. 12). Even the woman who was a sinner, in that other Simon's house, anointed Jesus because she "loved much ;" but whilst *she* anointed His feet, over which, in deep shame and penitence, she poured forth the tears of her first love, Mary desires fully and entirely to love the tender Friend, who had long been the only loved One of her soul—therefore she empties the entire glass over His head, and, as the ointment pours down, anoints his feet with the precious drops, and wipes them with her hair. "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" was the language of love in Peter ; and so feels Mary too. Wouldst thou love as Mary?—*then suffer thyself to be loved* like her. Pray of Jesus that He will bring fire to the altar on which thou offerest thy gift, even the fire of His own love to thee ; for that, only that, kindles our love to Him.

Ver. 4, 5, 6. *Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."*

Amongst the disciples who were sitting at table some there were who could not comprehend this deed of Mary's. In surprise they look one at the other. But in one of them the sight

of this anointing awoke a dark feeling of fury. Disgusting to him was the sweet odour of the ointment, for he hated Him whom Mary loved. This one was Judas. By the indignation which Judas expressed several of the disciples were carried away, not knowing the wickedness of his heart ; they began to murmur against the woman as if she were an enthusiast ; the Lord Himself—such was their opinion—would have had more reasonable service rendered to Him if the large sum which the ointment was worth (nearly ten pounds) had been given to the poor. Not that this was what Judas meant—he cared nothing for the poor ; he was a thief, and he was coveting the money which would thus have been added to their common stock, of which he was the keeper and manager ; and to so great a degree was he already the slave of darkness, that he could not refrain from expressing the wish, though it could now no longer be gratified. Also he was displeased because Jesus accepted with pleasure this offering of love.

Ver. 7, 8. *“Then said Jesus, Let her alone ; against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you ; but me ye have not always.”*

The Lord sorrowed deeply over Judas’s wickedness ; and the coldness of the other disciples, who murmured at Mary’s fervent love, pained Him likewise. But He blames them, not because they distress Him, but because they trouble Mary. And Mary seeks not to defend herself ; she looks at Jesus to see whether He too will call this act of her love a “waste.” From the disciples she mutely appeals to the Lord, and He defends her with the words, *“Let her alone ! Why trouble ye her ? She hath wrought a good work on me ?”* (Mark xiv. 6). On *Me*, the Lord says ; because “on Him,” therefore, Mary’s work had its goodness and beauty, as *all* good works.

“Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good ; but Me ye have not always.” The “whensoever ye will” applied to Judas, who did *not* will. Who would be likely to entertain towards the poor the greatest and

most generous love—Mary, or the murmuring friends of the poor? Beyond doubt, Mary. For he who loves Jesus as Mary loved Him, will love Him also where He is always present, in His poor members, and where He always will be, as in the land of Canaan, so also in the Church of the New Testament, in order that Christians may exercise and shew forth their love to Him (Deut. xv. 11). Indeed, love to Christ is the rich source and the living soul of every other love which reckons as such before God. Without love to Him all our “good works” are but an empty shell. The disciples’ love should have been kindled by Jesus’ visible nearness to them; they should have made it their delight to love Him *when they had Him*, that so they might not be able to cease loving Him when they should have Him with them thus no longer.

But the Lord’s eye beheld more in this anointing than Mary could understand. She had *done what she could*; she had deposited her whole love in this sacrifice of anointing, but what she had done went further than her understanding of it; in holy simplicity she had done more than she knew. For a burial the ointment was intended: not, however, the body of Lazarus, but Jesus’ body she was to prepare for burial; for this purpose she was to *keep* the ointment, as, according to St. John, the Lord says. Behold there the work which she wrought on Him! If the burnt-offering in the Old Testament was not considered a waste, who will be disposed to “trouble” Mary for having poured out her precious ointment over the body of that Sacrifice of which the other was but the type?

She was in the divine purpose set apart for this service, and was constrained to *come aforehand*, as we read in St. Mark, to anoint the Lord for His burial. What afterwards Nicodemus and Joseph did, *that* the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of prophecy, granted to Mary’s love to do *aforehand*. After His burial it would have been denied to her to anoint her Saviour’s body; now, the holy desire of her heart was fulfilled aforehand. “Would Mary, then, be glad to see Jesus dead and to bury

Him? If at that time she had been asked the question, she surely would have answered, No; but she would not have spoken rightly. Jesus knows her better than she knows herself. Know, then, that she loves Jesus as we love a dear deceased one, with a holy love, but at the same time with an unbounded love, which would gladly yield up everything to His service, everything being but too little. She loves Jesus as Him whom in faith she knows Him to be; and she knows Jesus as Him who keeps back nothing, but is altogether self-devoting and self-sacrificing Love. Although as yet she knows not of Jesus' approaching death, yet already she loves Jesus in that way in which on account of His death He would fain be loved, namely, as Him who is all things for us; and the love of such a Jesus she would fain honour with all that she is and all that she has." (*Die-drich.*)

This is our Saviour's manner; thus does He interpret the love of His disciples. Let us only do what we can, and then will He do what we cannot do: if we put into our doing all that we can, then will He put therein what far exceeds our power and thoughts. "In the works of the children of God there are often hidden mysteries which they themselves understand not," says an experienced Christian. Oh, how shall we marvel, when in the light of eternity we shall review our earthly course; when for the first time we shall fully understand all that God meant by what He led us to do through His Spirit!

Truly comforting for souls which are honest towards God is the word, "*She hath done what she could;*" but it is also a word of fearful earnestness. God inexorably requires of us that we should do what we can, *i. e.*, that we be *sincere*, otherwise in the days of grace we meet with no success (Luke viii. 18).

If Judas could yet have been saved, the Lord's patience and gentleness must have brought him on his knees before Him. There he stood, his whole heart before Jesus laid bare. And the Lord does not thrust him out, does not upbraid him with being a hypocrite, a liar, and a thief, and presently about to become

a murderer. He only knocks gently at the door of his heart with the foretelling of His death. It is as if He had said to him: "Mary has made me ready for my burial; and thou, Judas—how canst thou will to make me ready for death?" Judas could bear unmoved the Lord's look, and he went out to betray him.

We now enter upon the history of our Saviour's Passion. Would we know how we too might please Him? When, like Mary, we prepare Him for His burial. We have not all of us, as she had, something precious to offer; but He esteems it a present when with penitent hearts we bewail all our sins, both past and present, when we weep over all the guilt which hung Him upon the cross and laid Him in the grave, when we allow our tears to be the ointment of spikenard which we pour out upon His head. Yes, let sorrow for our sins be the bitter myrrh of our spikenard! What else have we that we can give Him but our poor, sick, good-for-nothing heart? And His love begs it of us: "My Son, give me thy heart."

The Hour is come that the Son of Man should be Glorified.

CHAPTER XII. 20-36.

Draw us to Thee, O Thou exalted Saviour, that we may follow Thee through sufferings, and thus attain unto glory. Amen.

Six days before the Feast, the Lord left Ephrem and came to Bethany, and there Mary anointed Him, the raiser up of her brother, for His burial,—for so He interpreted the service which, in her all-devoting love, she rendered to Him. Mary had done what she *could*; but in fact, she had done more than she *knew*. Not the rancorous Caiaphas alone was to *prophecy*, because of his being the High Priest of this year, of the death of Christ, but also the loving Mary was to *prophecy* thereof, because she was the anointed disciple of the Word of Life.†

A large number of people was assembled at Bethany, in order that in this spot, which He had consecrated by the revelation of His glory, they might see Jesus (ver. 9-11). In the midst of this multitude, and escorted by many of the Passover guests from Jerusalem, the King of Israel entered the next day into Jerusalem, riding on the foal of an ass, and amidst shouts of Hosanna from the people (ver. 12-18). On this His entrance into Jerusalem we have accompanied the Lord in the Gospel of St. Luke.

St. John expressly mentions on this occasion that the people

who accompanied Jesus exalted Him as the One who had raised up Lazarus. Thus, whilst He moved forward to meet the suffering of death, the anguish and sorrow of which already filled His mind (ver. 27), the testimony preceded Him that he was the Resurrection and the Life ; and also He Himself was looking forward through His sufferings into His glory, and this with so clear a gaze, that His *hour of suffering* appeared to His eye as His *hour of glorification*.

When the people's shouts of joy (who, unwittingly, being moved thereto by the Holy Ghost, fulfilled a prediction of Old Testament prophecy ; for even the disciples understood not what they were this day doing to their Master)—when the people's shouts of joy were surrounding the King of Zion, the Pharisees said among themselves : "*Perceive ye how ye avail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him!*" Even in these angry words, which were intended to bring over those who were yet wavering to Caiaphas's decision, there lies concealed a sort of *prophecy* ; and what we shall immediately after read is a prelude to the fulfilment of this prophecy.

In the inner court of the Temple, near the Treasury, Jesus pauses for a while, and beholds in spirit how, whilst the Temple built of precious stones is destroyed, the Temple of His body, on the other hand, which in God's sight is precious, after that He has overcome the destroyer, which is Death, is restored and built up. Living stones shall be built into the spiritual House, this House of Life ; and these, not from Israel only, but all the children of God who are scattered abroad throughout the world shall be there, brought together and united in one.

Ver. 20, 21. "*And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast ; the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.*"

Whilst Israel was hailing the approach of the Messiah, *certain Greeks* also were longing to see Him. These men, like many

God-fearing Gentiles at that time—as, for example, Cornelius and the Eunuch from Ethiopia—being weary of their idols, were seeking the true God, and at the great feasts worshipped at Jerusalem, in the house of prayer appointed for all nations. “Just as the setting sun throws the most brilliant rays, illuminating the horizon far and wide, so the glory which beamed forth from the Lord, while standing on the threshold of death, was so marvellously beautiful, that a desire to see Him was awakened, even in the Gentiles, who were from afar; just as He also, in the time of His early dawn, in His childhood, had, through the light of the wondrous star, drawn the wise men from Persia to his cradle, as the first fruits of the Gentiles.” (John Gerhard.) With feelings of reverence, these Greeks, who dared not enter the inner court of the Temple, address themselves to the Apostles, and in particular to *Philip*, as it would seem, because, being of *Bethsaida of Galilee*, he was therefore their neighbour (Matt. iv. 15), and, perhaps, also especially familiar with the Greek language—with the request: “*We would see Jesus!*” “It was only through the Church of Christ, gathered out of Israel, that the Gentiles attained to personal saving communion with Christ.” (Luthardt.) To see Jesus is their desire,—not only with their bodily eyes, but also with the eyes of their spirit, and to Him, as the King of Glory, to present their homage. The Saviour’s answer shows that, to the willing sacrifice of their homage, the *myrrh* was yet wanting which the wise men had mixed with the gold and frankincense; a Jesus who, through *bitter sufferings*, must enter into His glory, was what they had no idea of seeing. Philip was uncertain what to do, and sought the advice of one of his brethren.

Ver. 22. “*Philip cometh and telleth Andrew*” (his countryman, chap. i. 44, who also, in chap. vi. 5, is named together with him, seeking his advice under his embarrassment on that occasion), “*and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*”

Andrew emboldened Philip to bring the request of these Gentiles to the Lord.

Did Philip bring forward the objection: "He has forbidden us to go into the way of the Gentiles?" (Matt. x. 5). Andrew will perhaps have answered: "But did He not nevertheless Himself receive the Canaanitish woman?" At length they are agreed in determining that their Lord's word: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," must also hold good with respect to these Gentiles. They came, though unsummoned; as afterwards the Macedonians desired the salvation which the Jews thrust away (Acts xvi. 9; comp. chap. xiii. 48). It is true that St. John does not expressly say that Jesus permitted these "children of God who were scattered abroad" to come to Him; but we clearly learn from the words that follow as an answer to their request, that He did not cast them out, but that with the like emotion of loving joy as on that former occasion in Samaria (chap iv. 35), He welcomed and accepted their longing for the Saviour. If indeed they took pleasure in a Jesus who Himself *goes* and likewise *conducts* His servants, to life through the path of death, then truly they did see Jesus, and that with blessed eyes.

Ver. 23. "*And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*"

It was at the right hour, then, that these Gentiles had craved to see Jesus. Their desire was to be fulfilled beyond what they asked or understood, together with the secret desire of *all* the dispersed children of God. *For the hour for the glorification of the Son of Man was come*, viz., the hour appointed for the accomplishment of the work of atonement, when the *glory* of the Son of Man, in the midst of His shameful sufferings, ay, even *through* the *suffering* of death (Heb. ii. 9), should come out in transcendent energy; for *God was in Christ*, and was reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Cor. v. 19), in order that the reconciled world might be full of the glory of God. *In the glorification of the Son of Man* (a glorification which *for Him* was virtually present from the beginning, but in this gracious hour was come *for us*) are contained

three points: first, the completion in the holy Sacrifice of His willing love, of His obedience, thus carried out even to the death of the cross (chap. xvii. 19; Phil. ii. 8; Heb. ii. 10, v. 8, 9); secondly, His exaltation to the glory which belonged to Him as the Eternal Word, of which He, in humiliation as the Incarnate Word, emptied Himself, in order, through the merit of His sufferings, to earn it again for the human nature which He had taken unto Himself (chap. xvii. 5; Phil. ii. 9); thirdly (as the result and fruit of the first and second), the setting forth of His name as the Saviour of all men, whom He has made atonement for through His blood, and whom, to the praise of His glorious grace, He gathers together into one in His holy Church through the Gospel (chap. xi. 52, xvii. 2; Phil. ii. 10); so that now, since the accomplishment of His baptism of blood, the fire of the Holy Ghost is burning which He came on earth to kindle (Luke xii. 49, 50), and the streams of the Holy Ghost, as living waters, are flowing forth from the glorified Head of the Church upon all and through all the members (chap. vii. 38, 39).

This threefold import of the glorification of the Son of Man is unfolded to us by the Lord's discourse which follows, whose text John Gerhard finds already contained in the words, "*The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*" The glorification of the Son of Man, who, as the Crucified One, draws *all men* to Himself, and who, as the corn of wheat which dying brings forth *much* fruit, shines forth in this discourse all the brighter, because it was to Gentiles desiring to see Jesus that the words were primarily addressed.

Ver. 24. "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*"

The twofold *verily* is designed to meet all earthly, fleshly thoughts concerning the glorification of the Son of Man, and marks with greater emphasis the seeming contradiction, that with the hour of His *death*, the hour of His *glorification* is

also come. By means of a simile which must have attracted the Greeks, accustomed to search into the mysteries of Nature, the Lord sets forth the intimate connexion between His death and glorification. Just as the dying of the corn of wheat, falling into the ground, does not prevent its bearing fruit, but rather causes the work to commence : so, the death of the Son of Man, instead of being an hindrance to His glorification, is rather the means of its being effected. For as the grain of wheat which is unsown and which dies not, *abideth alone*, without any fruit of wheat, so would Christ the Son of God abide alone, without Christians and children of God, if He had not died for us, in order, as the Risen One, to share His blessed life with those whom first by His death He has redeemed: the Spirit of Life would, as a still lake, repose in Him alone, if He had not so incorporated His believers into membership with His glorified body as that "from their belly should flow rivers of living water" (chap. vii. 38, 39).

From the perishing of the grain of wheat springs forth the harvest of the Gentiles. *Much* fruit does the noble Grain of Wheat bring forth: throughout all ages, even into eternity, the Life continues which springs from the perishing of this heavenly Grain; and every inheritor of eternal Life lives as a grain of the full ear which has grown out of this one Corn of Wheat (Isa. liii. 10), that is, as a member of the risen Body of Jesus Christ. As it was not good for the first Adam to be *alone*, and God prepared from his body a wife for him; so the second Adam gave Himself up to death, that He might not in His heavenly kingdom abide alone, but that He might share what was His with the Church created from Him and for Him (Eph. v. 29). The Apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. xv., applies the simile of the grain of wheat, whose invisible germ of life breaks forth from the enveloping substance which perishes in the earth, to the bodies of Christians, which are sown in corruption, and are raised in incorruption. Christ is the *First-fruits* of the harvest of the resurrection; as on the third day He arose

with a glorified body (on the very day, too, of the presentation of the first-fruits of the harvest), so at the last day will He rise again in millions of His members, and then the rich fruit of glory will be completely gathered in which, in the great seed-time of the New Testament is being sown. The Lord Himself interprets the simile which in its first sense applies to *His own* course of glorification—through sufferings to glory—as also applying to the course of glorification through which His *servants* are to pass. “It is a faithful saying: For *if we be dead with Him*, we shall also *live with Him*: if we *suffer*, we shall also *reign with Him*: if we *deny Him*, He also will *deny us*: this apostolical word let us peruse between the 24th and the following verse. “Oh, be thou planted with Him into a like death! The beginning is small, the spring of growth strong, the harvest great. In the very lowest step which thou takest into the fellowship of His sufferings and the likeness of His death, thou mayest take with thee this hope: there will be a rising again in power, in glory.” (Rieger.)

Ver. 25, 26. “*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, and where I am, there shall also My servant be. If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour.*”

If any one would “*see Jesus*”—see Him in His glory—let him contemplate Him as He willingly casts away His life into death, that it may become seed springing up in the glory of many children of God; but on the other hand, if any one would obey and *serve Him*, *let him follow Him*, having the same mind as Jesus Christ had. The disciples were doubtless not a little cheered by these Greeks desiring to see Jesus, their Jesus whom the Jews so scornfully rejected. “Now the work goes on gloriously,” they might think; “now is He already glorified in the isles. What we have as yet seen is but a light thing compared to that which is now coming to pass.” Therefore the Saviour returns again to the subject of the Cross, so unpleasing

to hear, yet so salutary and necessary to learn. Thus there is a connexion between these two verses and the foregoing one. "The grains of wheat which grow from that which is sown in the ground and there perishes, resemble the original seed; and in like manner, Christians who have their origin in Christ, are after the image of Christ. He who hides his grain of wheat in the barn and neglects to cast it in the ground, will lose it, for in time it perishes; but he who does not scruple to cast it in the ground, and, as it were, consign it to death, he guards it in the safest manner possible; for in a short time he receives back with rich usury what he appeared to have lost. So fares it, likewise, with the man who *loves his life* with a false love, and refuses to give it up for the honour of Christ—he *will lose it*; but he who *hates* it, and for Christ's sake throws it away to death, *will keep it unto life eternal*." (John Gerhard.)

More than once did the Lord express, in the same words as He here emphatically repeats, the course of life which those must lead who would follow Him. He who withholds the sacrifice of his own life from the living God, whether it be demanded as the inward offering of his heart, or also as the offering of his bodily life in martyrdom, shall *lose* what he loves more than God, and it will be made manifest that his *love* for his so-called life was in reality a *hating* of his true life; but he who hates his own—as sundered from God—vain life, and that *in this world*, which, with its bewitching pleasures, entices him to the love of this life, will triumphantly *keep it unto life eternal*, and it will be made manifest that his *hating* of his so-called life was a *loving* of his true life. "It is a marvellous saying, that a man loves his life to lose it, and hates it to preserve it. If thou hast loved ill, thou hast hated; but if thou hast hated aright, thou hast loved. The man who loves himself, not God, loves not himself; but he who loves God, not himself, loves himself." (Augustine.) Those are hours in which Christians appear in their glory, when they, through grace, succeed in hating their life in this world, and in laying it in Christ's grave with Him, that they

may keep it, as fruit on Christ's tree of life, unto life eternal (Rom. vi. 5; 2 Cor. iv. 10); and not only to martyrs, who loved not their lives unto the death, are such hours of glory granted, but also to every true follower of Christ who resists even to blood in the conflict with sin, to every one who acquiesces in the darling wish of his own will being broken, and in the love of this world being embittered to him,—to every one who willingly stoops to bear the bitter but salutary cross, and stills his heart and satisfies its yearnings in that life eternal which is hidden in God, of which he virtually has the blissful possession already by faith, and for the glorious manifestation of which he waits in certain hope. Long had St. Peter and St. Paul trod this path of glorification, before Christ was magnified in their body by their martyr's death (Phil. i. 20); and St. John, too, walked in the same path, although he "tarried" until the Lord came to his death-bed and he calmly breathed his last (1 John iv. 17).

"*If any man serve me, let him follow me,*" the Lord says. In this answer He meets the Greeks desiring to serve Him; in the same manner He met the Scribe that offered to follow Him, to whom He said, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." It is not ever Palm Sunday; Good Friday soon follows, and then, and not till then, comes Easter morning. A command full of promise, and a promise full of command, is this word, "*Where I am, there shall also my servant be.*" Wherever Christ is, whether in suffering or in glory, whether here, in this vale of sorrow, or above, in the halls of bliss, there must and there will His servant also be (chap. xiv. 3, xvii. 24). He follows the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, even to sitting down with Him on His Throne. Ay, even in the midst of suffering and of death, if only we are following in the path that Christ trod, the sweet comfort may be ours that He is with us, and that we are with Him, already sharing in His life and glory (Romans viii. 30). For He does not say, "*Where I shall be,*" but, "*Where I am, there shall also my servant be.*" He is in

Heaven even whilst He is walking on earth and in the humiliation of His sorrowing flesh (ver. 27); and therefore we also ought to be with Him in Heaven all the way through which we follow Him, from our baptism to our grave, since it is through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God. Yet, as for Him, the Lord of Glory, an hour of glorification was prepared, so also for His glorified servants there is an hour reserved, when to the astonishment of the world, it shall be seen what is promised to them in the word, "*If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour.*" The Father will honour the Son in the servants of the Son, and will exalt them, the sharers in their Saviour's shame and cross, even as He has exalted the Son (chap. xvii. 22); their self-devoting service will bear fruit in Jesus Christ, and therefore to be allowed to serve Him in His kingdom will be for their honour, even here, and their crown of joy above. Honour! God, the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, *honour* such a poor sinner as me! No man could venture to express himself thus, if Christ had not literally said, *honour*. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels (or, as it is literally in the Hebrew, Thou hast made him for a little time to fall short of divinity, but) *Thou crownest him with glory and honour.*" For the sake of the Son of Man, the word of this psalm is to have its fulfilment in man. Oh, how blind and infatuated is the man who despises this honour with God, because he prefers the honour of this world! "It was indeed a great thing for Joseph to be honoured by Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and Mordecai, by Ahasuerus the Persian Prince; but what a surpassingly greater thing it is that the Blessed and Only Potentate, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords, is pleased to honour the servants of Christ! But this is what Christ means: My servants have one and the same lot with me in this world, for as I, like a corn of wheat, shall be laid in the ground and die, so also must they hate their life in this world,

and for my sake and the Gospel's sake be willing to give it up. But in like manner as my Heavenly Father will exalt me to glory after I have been rejected by the world and have died on the cross, so will He also adorn my servants with eternal and heavenly glory. For, not with empty words does God honour those whom He is pleased to honour ; but, as He speaks facts and realities, so in fact and reality He honours the servants of Christ, by bestowing upon them riches for poverty, the crown of glory for shame, life for death, joy for sorrow ; while, for the loss of temporal goods which they suffer for the gospel's sake, He compensates them with the fulness of eternal, infinite blessings. (J. Gerhard.)

Hitherto the Lord has been speaking of the hour of His death, which had now arrived, as of an hour of victory ; hitherto the eye of His holy soul has reposed with undimmed clearness on the glory into which He was entering, and leading His own with Him. The Bridegroom of the soul is beheld moving towards His sufferings as to wedding joys. Yes, the day of His espousals, the day of the gladness of His heart, had, by the request of these salvation-craving Gentiles, been displayed to His view (Cant. iii. 11). But now we suddenly see a change pass over Him. A parallel instance is recalled to our minds. Immediately after He had offered up His sacerdotal prayer, in which His soul appears as a bright mirror of the Father's glory, then it was that He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, into the garden of Gethsemane, and began to be sore amazed and very heavy, and said to them, "*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,*" went further on into the dark garden to pray and to wrestle in unspeakable agony. And just so, at this present moment, He presents Himself to His *disciples* and to His *Father*. What, according to the three first Evangelists, the Saviour suffered in Gethsemane, that same we see Him here accepting, when with anguish and pain He receives the cup which the Father has given Him, and which He was soon to drain to the very last drop.

Ver. 27. "*Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: But for this cause came I into this hour. Father, glorify thy name.*"

He had just been encouraging the disciples to hold on with Him in their path of death and self-denial; "Where I *am*, there shall also my servant be;" and *now*, where is He? In anguish and dread they behold Him. "*Now is my soul troubled*," He says; for He has no desire to hide from them what passes in His soul. He now (whilst their spirits are still high as on a festival) *shows* them the cup which, from the cradle to the cross, it was His calling as Saviour to drink. Troubled (literally, *shaken, agitated*) was His soul as it entered into the bitterness of the suffering which He had undertaken, and allowed the feeling of His death-sorrows to enter. (Comp. chap. xi. 33.) In order to measure the woe—which, however, is immeasurable—the sense of which now made His soul shudder, we must contemplate therein the woe of that particular death, which, as the Lamb of God bearing the sin of the world, was paid home to Him as the "wages" of that sin. Jesus was to die, not the death of a righteous man, but the death of every sinner at once; from His Father's cup He was to drink, even to the dregs, all the infinite wrath of God against a hell-deserving world: it was this which caused His holy, innocent soul to shudder—a soul which was at all times a filled receptacle of Divine love; it was from this that He shrank, He who is in Heaven and who is Life, and who in Himself has with hell and death no manner of affinity.

"O Death, thou stranger visitant of earth!

A bitter load wast thou to that sweet Heart.

Into this world a woman gave thee birth,

Who the world's Maker causest boundless smart."

But blessed be His holy will that He did not conceal from us His trouble at the approach of death; His trouble has become for us the cause of rejoicing in the hour of death. Because He has been troubled for us, the prince of this world has become powerless to trouble us above what we can bear; he is cast out

of his principality, he is thrust away from the believer's death-bed. "O Jesus, what do I behold? Thou dost command my soul to follow Thee, and now Thy soul is troubled! Alas! what power have I to bear what Thy strength finds so heavy? Where shall I find firm footing, when the Rock itself trembles? But I think I hear the Lord answering these my thoughts, and saying, Thou shalt indeed follow; for to this end I set myself forth as a Mediator, that thou mayest be able to bear what, without me, thou wouldest find unbearable. Thou hast heard the Voice of my Power upon thyself; now thou hearest in me the voice of thy weakness. I reach forth to thee strength for the fulfilment of thy course; for what is ready to crush thee I take upon myself, and I will tread under thy feet every obstacle in thy way. O Jesus, Thou faithful Mediator, God over us, Man for us, I acknowledge Thy compassion. For because, O great King, according to the will of Thy love, Thou art troubled, therefore Thou consolest many members of Thy body, who, constrained by their weakness, feel themselves troubled, that they may not be overwhelmed by anguish." (Augustine.)

As in Gethsemane, so here the *prayer* of Jesus opens before us a view into the depth of His trouble; it places before our eyes the hard conflict in which the strength of his obedience, mighty through love, wrestles with the terrors of death. Two desires, alike holy, strive together for mastery in His soul; the one, to be delivered from this hour; the other, to glorify His Father's name in the endurance of this hour. The troubled soul of Jesus prays for both at the same moment; but human lips cannot express at once all that was working at the same time in His soul; and therefore it is that from the Saviour's oppressed heart the cry wells forth, "*What shall I say?*" Compare a similar sigh in Joshua's prayer of anguish, Joshua vii. 8. "*Father, save me from this hour!*" If it be possible, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt; "*but for this cause came I unto this hour,*" in order that I might endure it; therefore Thou dost hold this cup to my lips,

that I may drain it to the last drop. It cannot pass from me unless I drink it; *thus*, and in no other way, wilt thou save me from this hour, and glorify Thy name in me; therefore let Thy will be done. "*Father, glorify thy name!*" Glorify Thy name as the Holy, Merciful, Almighty God; in the sacrifice unto which I sanctify and present myself, reveal Thy consuming wrath against sin and Thy saving love towards sinners; and, after my victory, may a redeemed people offer a willing sacrifice of thanks "in the beauties of my holiness."

When Jesus prayed, "*Father, save me from this hour,*" the devil, we may believe, laughed in scorn, all confident of his world-princedom, and called out to his mighty ones, "Now have *we* conquered, the world remains ours! For behold, it costs the Son of God too much to redeem the world by bleeding and dying!" But when Jesus prayed, "*Father, glorify Thy name!*" then the Prince of this world began to perceive that he would now be cast out (ver. 31). Nothing, nothing whatever, had he in the Son of Man, even in these moments of trouble (chap. xiv. 30); for Jesus, with prayer and supplication—as our example—offered up entirely His human will in perfected obedience to the will of His Father; not even the smallest particle of self will cling to His soul whereby the enemy might lay hold of Him. Thus, even this hour of apprehensive conflict and suffering, the prelude of what was to come, became itself an hour of victory and glorification, and thus confirmed was the word, "*The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*" But to the witnesses of Jesus' trouble, it behoved that the glory should be made clearly *manifest* into which He had victoriously *prayed* His way; therefore the "hearing" Father answered *aloud* to the Son praying to Him *aloud*.

Ver. 28. "*Then came there a voice from heaven, saying: I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*"

In lonely Gethsemane, a silent angel strengthened the praying Saviour; but here, a voice from Heaven, like thunder, viz., the voice of the Living Father, resounds for the manifestation of

the glory of His only begotten Son. For the third time does the Father solemnly bear witness to the Son, whilst for the third time He accepts the Sacrifice, as one well-pleasing to Him, for which the Son presents Himself to Him. At His baptism, when Jesus took upon Himself to fulfil all righteousness, and at His transfiguration on the holy mount, when he talked with Moses and Elias concerning His decease, that same Voice had spoken from Heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Therewith agrees what the Father now testifies. while echoing back His Son's prayer, "Father, glorify Thy name;" "I *have* both glorified it, and *will* glorify it *again*."

"I have glorified it." In this *His only begotten Son*, the true God *had* glorified His name as the *Father* of Jesus Christ, from the time that He was conceived and born of the blessed Virgin, up to this hour, for the Saviour's whole course of life was that of the Son of God in the flesh, full of grace and truth; and those who saw with St. John's eyes, beheld also the glory with which the Father glorified His name in the only begotten Son. "I will glorify it again." He *will* glorify it *again*, for to His Son's word on the cross, "It is finished!" He will give answer by His resurrection and exaltation, in order that He might be declared with power to be the Son of God and the Great Shepherd of the sheep, in whom, through the blood of an everlasting covenant, the name of God is glorified as the God of *peace* (Heb. xiii. 20). Since the time of the Lord's ascension the history of the Church has been a fulfilment of the word, "I will glorify it again;" and this will of God to honour His name is accomplished in the case of every Christian who is saved through faith in Christ Jesus (Isa. xlix. 3).

The heavenly Voice which received the Son of God when entering the threshold of His Passion, and in the very place of His sacrificial sufferings, was the best interpretation of what, a short time before, human voices, uttering more than they understood, had cried out: "Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

The salvation offered to the people by Jesus had never approached so near to them as in this sacred moment. The *first* Voice from heaven had only been heard by John the Baptist; the second, only by the three most favoured disciples; but this *third* Voice was intended for the *people*. Notwithstanding, those who were strangers and enemies to the Voice of God in the written word and in the incarnate Word (chap. v. 37, viii. 43)—they heard neither the Voice of God uttered down from the heavens.

Ver. 29. "*The people, therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.*"

Compare Acts ix. 7, xxii. 9;* also Daniel x. 7. St. John writes this in sorrowful remembrance. He himself had, with enraptured ear, distinctly heard the very words of the heavenly Voice;† why, then, did the people say that it had merely thundered? Because their estrangement from God prevented any Voice of God from being accessible to them. A sound they heard; but instead then of listening and keeping still silence, that God might speak to them, they allowed their thoughts to run in their accustomed worldly channel; and thus they failed to catch the utterance of God's Voice! A sad type are these Jews of all earthly-minded hearers, who only hear human utterance and not heavenly words—not the *Fatherly Voice* of God—when they hear the Gospel preached. Others—they doubtless who from their hearts had cried, Hosanna—did at least detect the present revelation of the powers of the future world: they heard *words* which, because they did not distinctly understand their purport, they ascribed to an angel speaking to

* All saw the flash of light, but only Saul beheld the Lord who appeared in that light: all heard the sound of a voice, but only Saul distinguished the words which the voice uttered.

† "A Son of Thunder (Mark iii. 17) is well fitted to hear a Voice of Thunder." (*Bengel*.) It is worthy of notice that it was St. John who was selected to be the hearer of the judicial Thunderings which peal through the Revelation (see especially Rev. iv. 5, &c., x. 3). The Lord's word in verse 31, "Now is the judgment of this world," was deeply engraven on his heart.

Jesus. In these men are shadowed forth those hearers of the word who are indeed touched by its heavenly power, but yet do not at once understand how to make use of the access which has been opened for them into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven: to such it will be graciously given to advance, if they only diligently continue to hear the word; just as here, the Lord in the most gracious manner draws on these hearers of the supposed Angel's words to the understanding of the heavenly Voice.

Ver. 30. "*Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes.*"

If the Father had intended His words for the *Son's* ear alone, there would have been no need for a Voice sounding as loud as thunder; but rather for the *people's* sake it was that this Voice came down from heaven; and the Lord, by distinctly attributing it to their wants, at once accuses those whose ear was deaf of not knowing God's speech, and to those whose hearts were prepared for it, brings the heavenly Voice nearer, and interprets it to them. The Father will again glorify His name in the Son as He had hitherto glorified it: this promise is contained in the most gracious manner in the following words:—

Ver. 31, 32. "*Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.*"

Now, when the Soul of the Saviour is preparing itself to endure the bitterness and the judgment of death (ver. 27), and the Father to the presented sacrifice of the Son pronounces a loud Amen (ver. 28)—*now is the judgment of this world come*. The world, which had risen in rebellion against God's Saviour, is laid at the feet of her Conqueror—a judgment of *wrath* upon all who shall perish with the world, but a judgment of *mercy* upon all who shall be saved out of the world. *For the prince of this world shall now be cast out*. Through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the devil's armour—the symbol expressing

his dominion over the unreconciled world—is taken from him (Luke xi. 22); he shall be cast out of that sovereignty which the hell-deserving but dearly-cherished sin of men allowed him to occupy—driven away from the presence of the Judge before whom he shall no longer dare to make his accusations (Rev. xii. 10). True, the devil is doing his utmost to recover his dominion, and he still demeans himself as if he were the prince of this world; and, indeed, the deadly wound inflicted upon him by the Lamb of God is so far healed again for a time (Rev. xiii. 3) that his world-seducing power celebrates new triumphs, for the unbelief of the world is a strengthening of its old prince. Nevertheless, the word still remains, *he is cast out* (Rev. xii. 9; Col. ii. 15), and through the blood of the Lamb he is vanquished by believers, who, though they still have sin, yet no unforgiven sin, no indulged sin. If ever they experience any painful surprise at the fearful power of the prince of the world, who yet is cast out, let them go into the Sanctuary of God, into Scripture, and see his *end*, the final execution of the infallible sentence which was passed upon him in the hour of Jesus's death and glorification. For the further strengthening of our belief in His victory, the Lord again and again lets us see in His judgment upon the power of the world, that His Church enters in upon the high places of her enemy. The first comforting sign of this victory He gave to the Church in Jerusalem, when James being slain with the sword and Peter imprisoned, Herod Agrippa, that Edomitist representative of the prince of this world, was slain by the Angel of the Lord, "because he gave not God the glory," who had manifestly been confronting him in the deliverance of His servant Peter.

Over against the cast out prince of this world the Lord Jesus now places Himself and His saving power: "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.*" Let us also add the explanation which the Evangelist gives.

Ver. 33. "*This He said, signifying what death He should die.*"

Therefore not *in spite of* His death, but rather *by means of the same*, was Jesus *to be lifted up from the earth*. The lofty beam on which He was lifted up itself fully signified the death of the Crucified One; the inscription thereon was the sign of His throne, as the crown of thorns was of His kingly dignity. Lifted up from the earth He hung upon the cross; this form was fitting for Him who, through the very sufferings of this shameful death, was lifted up above the earth as the Prince of Victory, as the King of Glory, under whose wounded heel the head of the serpent lay trodden and crushed. The prince of this world was cast out in that all-gracious hour when Christ bare the sin of the world in His Body, and carried it up on the cross, and through the cross was lifted up to be, for all sinners redeemed by Him from the power of the devil, the Captain of eternal Salvation. Therefore He says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, *will draw all men unto Me*."

The corn of wheat brings forth *much* fruit if it fall into the ground and die (ver. 24): behold, *such* a death will Christ die! Thus will He, the elevated Solomon, grant the request of the daughter of Zion: He will *draw* her that she may run after Him (Cant. i. 4)—draw her and all the "daughters of Jerusalem." Who can declare His generation? Yes, from the cross, where He has tasted death for every man, He would fain draw all men unto Himself, Jews and Greeks, the thief and the centurion, in order that they may be where He is—blessed sharers of His elevation from the earth, because through faith they die with Him to this earthly world to live with Him in heavenly places (ver. 25; Col. iii. 1, &c.) The crucified Saviour promises to draw to Himself *all men*; in reality He is doing it through the preaching of the Gospel sounding in all the world; for this offers to all the finished atonement, exhorting and entreating: Be ye reconciled to God! Compassion there is for all, a ransom paid for all. None shall remain but shall be drawn by the Father and by the Son; and all who ever come to Christ and are saved are drawn to Him through the

power of God working in the word from the *cross* (1 Cor. i. 18).

Yet observe ! Christ will *draw* all men to Himself, but none will He *force*. The prince of this world, it is true, has, through Christ's being lifted up on the cross, lost all power to retain redeemed sinners under his authority or to hinder their conversion ; yet he who prefers slavery in the kingdom of the devil and rejects freedom in the kingdom of Christ, does his part in helping to heal the death-wound which has cast the enemy to the ground, and to put on him again the armour which Christ has taken from him. The cross of Christ is a strong magnet of love to draw sinners' hearts to itself ; but as arsenic quenches the power of the magnet's attraction, so the poison of continued unbelief deprives the cross of Christ of its power of attraction ; and the reason why many are no longer drawn by it, is because when they were drawn they withstood. Comp. chap. vi. 37. and 44.

Or dost thou *complain* that thou art not drawn ? Be comforted, for this thy trouble is itself the commencement of thy being drawn. "Art thou not drawn ? then pray that thou mayest be drawn, and thou art drawn." (Augustine.) May the Lord be pleased from the cross to hear us and bless us, as often as we pray "that the hearts of all men may be wholly drawn away from earth to centre in Him." Yes, daily drawn as we are through the Holy Ghost in the word, let us not delay to follow the drawing to the cross, and then Christ will not draw us in vain although the devil will. "On the one side there is Christ drawing the redeemed ; on the other side the devil trying to draw them back ; the one draws from above, the other from beneath ; the one to eternal life, the other to eternal death ; the one to never-fading joy, the other to unheard-of misery ; the one to an imperishable crown, the other to ever-enduring shame. It rests with ourselves to follow Christ, who draws us upward, and withstand the devil, who draws us downward." (J. Gerhard.)

Ver. 34. "*The people answered Him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever : and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?*"

The questioners are the inspired Hosanna singers of Palm Sunday. They had conducted Jesus, the Son of Man, into Jerusalem as the promised Christ; and now He was speaking of His removal from the earth, of His dying; this did not square with the notions which they—as they say, out of the *Law*, out of the Scriptures—had formed of Christ. Their Christ was to abide for ever, and that on earth, as King of a glorious kingdom of Israel; thus they interpreted the passages of Scripture which speak of His eternal kingdom; the passages in Psalms lxxii. 17, lxxxix. 37, cxix. 4, based on 2 Samuel vii. 16. This was the sense in which Christ was to *them* the End of the Law and of the whole history of Israel. That His dying was the very way to His eternal abiding (Isa. liii. 3)—*this* was hidden from them, because they had no relish for the declarations of Scripture which testify of the *sufferings* which are in Christ (so Luther renders it), and the glory that shall follow. On this account they only half understood the word, *lifted up*, and saw not through into the hour of the Son of Man's glorification. According to their ideas, "this Son of Man" who was to die could not be Christ. *Then who was he?* The Lord meets this foolish question with perfect meekness. Indeed, if even His beloved disciples were not able until Easter morning to perceive that the hour of His suffering was the hour of His glorification, and to see in the Crucified One the Exalted One, should He not bear with the slowness of this people's faith? He bears with it; but, without forcing them to understand that which was as yet hidden from them, and which could only be unveiled to them by actual deed preaching it, he addresses to their sluggish and unbelieving hearts a loud and earnest summons to awake:

Ver. 35-36. "*Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth*

not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light !”

The *Light* is this Son of Man (chap. viii. 12)! He reminds them of this His name in order that they may allow themselves to be enlightened by Him and afterwards learn *in what way* He was to abide for ever as Christ, viz., by dwelling inwardly through the Holy Ghost in the partners of the kingdom of His cross, until the time when His glory shall burst forth also in outward manifestation (Luke xvii. 20). Only *yet a little time* was the Light *with* them, in order through His gracious illumination to become Light *within* them; for the time of the people's gracious visitation, when it *had* the Light as a Light manifested to *them*, was now about to cease. He who neglected this time, and who would not be allured to *walk* in the way along which the Light was going before him. *Darkness* must *overtake* such an one, and so get the mastery of him that no ray of light could any longer penetrate to him. This fearful judgment has fallen upon a people who loved darkness rather than light whilst they had the Light, and who therefore now, even to this day, walk on in obscurity, without one ray of light, *not knowing whither they go*, waiting for a light which will never come (Jer. xiii. 16, Is. viii. 20). The course of the Jewish people, so highly favoured and so deeply fallen, should engrave upon the heart of us, the Christian Israel, with letters of fire the words, “*Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you,*” that we may take heed, with fear and trembling, to every spark of light which the word of God essays to cast into our hearts (compare Rom. xi. 22). Luther was never weary of calling out to his nation, enlightened as it was by the bright beams of the Gospel, exhortations such as this—“Walk while ye have the light;” and at the end of the last edition of his translation of the New Testament he put the text, “*While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.*” He who, being enlightened through faith in the word which offers itself to be his light, becomes a light of

light, a *child of light*, as the Apostle did (Eph. v. 8); he remains for ever united with the Light. Such an one even finds the darkness of death illumined by the Light of Life; for in this light the *Crucified One* is transfigured to his views into the *Exalted One*. Well, then, just as the Lord *works* while He *is* in the world as the Light of the world, so let us be willing to work and *walk* while we *have* the light; for the night is coming, when no man can either work or walk!

Lord, who hath believed our Report?

CHAPTER XII. 37-50.

While we have Thy word, O Lord, grant that we may believe in it; and save us from the judgment of a hard and impenitent heart. Amen.

THE Lord's discourse on the text, "*The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified,*" had so completely filled the susceptible heart of St. John, that even when he was writing down his gospel, its sweet lustre was still shining around him. But the more he felt his happiness in believing on the Word and Light of Life, the more bitterly did he bewail the unbelief of his unhappy countrymen. Therefore, in bringing to an end the Lord's discourses *to the people*, he renews the complaint of the prophet Isaiah, the Evangelist of the Old Dispensation—"Lord, who hath believed our report?" recognising in the unbelieving the accomplishment of that judicial obduracy which the word of prophecy had foretold to them. But it was not only the disciple, but also the Lord Himself, who mourns over the unbelief of His people; His own, who received Him not. While in the act of hiding Himself from their benighted eyes and leaving them, He turned Himself to *the disciples* who believed on Him, and "cried" and spoke the words which commence at the 44th verse. These words are full of allusions to former discourses of His; indeed, they are, as it were, a holy summary of those discourses, designed both for the joy of the disciples who abode in His words, and also to guard them against conceiving offence. That so many, ay! that "the Jews," as a whole, believed not,

was not to be a stumbling-block to those who did believe in the Light and Life *of the world*. He did in truth offer Himself *to all* for Light and Life, and *the word which He spake* will accuse, at the last day, not *Him*, but *those who rejected Him*. It will judge as lovers of darkness all whom the Light has not enlightened.

Ver. 37. "*These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him.*"

He *departed*, that is, from the Temple, and *hid himself from them* outwardly, even as inwardly He was hidden from them,—thus pointing to the departure which was to take place at the expiration of the "little time," mentioned in verse 35,—that "hiding of His face," with which Moses had already threatened backsliding Israel (Deut. xxxii. 20). The Sun of Righteousness, with healing under His wings, was already, so far as the Jews were concerned, inclining towards His setting.

With a saddened eye, the Evangelist reviews the general course of the gracious ministry which the Son of God had discharged amongst Israel, mentioning in particular the many *miracles* with which, in unwearied love, He had accompanied His *words*,—and *all in vain* for this unbelieving people. Under the impression produced by the resurrection of Lazarus, of all Jesus' miracles the crowning one, the people had, even as late as on Palm Sunday, conducted Him into Jerusalem in a kind of triumph; nevertheless, they believed not on Him as being the Resurrection and the Life; they saw not His glory! The voice of the Living God had borne witness from heaven to the Only-begotten Son; yet, for all that, they believed not on the glorified Son of Man! *They* believed not, St. John sadly says: the *people*, as a whole, as a people, received Him not; the "*many*," who, in chap. x. 42, and xi. 45, are spoken of as believers, were yet *few*, compared with the number of those who rejected Him, and those few were thrust out of the bosom of the national fellowship.

The Saviour, lifted up on the cross, would fain draw *all men* to Himself; and yet now St. John sees his own people walk away in obstinate unbelief! Here his feet were almost gone; his treadings had well nigh slipped; he thought to understand this, but it was too hard for him, until he went into the Sanctuary of God, into Scripture,—that refuge from which his beloved Master had so often drawn consolation in His dark and toilsome way, while He said to His soul: “That the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

Ver. 38-40. “*That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*”

The unbelief of the people did not meet the Lord Jesus Christ unexpectedly as a hostile power, which had not been reckoned up in the plan of His government, and which had done violence to His honour; no, not only did He foreknow how contemptuously He would be received by His own, but He himself punished them with blindness, because they did not welcome His light (chap. ix. 39).

The first passage which St. John quotes from Isaiah is taken from chap. liii. 1. No other passage could he have chosen which strikes so straight at the very heart of the people which rejected their King, who was *lifted up on the Cross*, as this does. It is the well known chapter of the Cross, which commences with the words: “*Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?*” The prophet foresees, and mourns over the unbelief of his people, who knew not the Lamb of God, neither at the place of slaughter, where It suffers, nor on the Throne, where It reigns. The *arm of the Lord*, the glorious power of God, which is *revealed* in the incarnate Word, is *hidden* from this blind people, and the preaching of His mouth,

in which the arm of His power is so busy, and through which the hearing of faith comes—that *they believe not*. With their eyes they *see* the Lord's arm stretched out towards them, with their ears they *hear* the Lord's far-resounding preaching; but they see not with seeing eyes *unto faith*, nor hear with hearing ears *unto faith*. And why not? Because they *cannot*. For Isaiah says again, that "*He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts*. St. John quotes this passage in such a form as that the Author of this blindness shall distinctly appear (it is the LORD, the same as there gives the command to His Prophet: "*Harden this people's heart, blind their eyes*"); and likewise, that the prophecy shall be seen to be now fulfilled. Compare Matt. xiii. 14, &c.; Acts xxviii. 25, &c., and Rom. xi. 8. The *preaching* of His word is the very instrument which God makes use of to harden its hearers:—this is the consideration from which we learn scripturally to understand this passage. A twofold savour—before God always a *good* savour—goes forth from the preachers of the Divine word; a savour of death unto death to them who are lost, a savour of life unto life to them who are saved. (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16). *To all* God's universal love is ready to impart life, and earnestly that Love desires that *all* should be helped through the preached word (Ezek. xxxiii. 11; 1 Tim. ii. 4-7); but nevertheless, those who *refuse* the Love which speaks to them may not escape the power of God laying its embargo upon them. (Heb. xii. 25). Those who refuse to *believe* the word must stumble at it. (1 Pet. ii. 8). They hinder, indeed, through their resisting obstinacy, the sanctifying of God *within* them, for He will *drive* no man to conversion (Acts vii. 51); but the sanctifying of God *on* them they cannot hinder, for He is resolved to force all to submission under His Almighty arm: because they do *not choose* to be softened and enlightened unto eternal life through His word, it has upon them a hardening operation unto death, so that step by step they become less and less susceptible to the ever stronger voice, and to the ever clearer revelation of God's glory, until at length they cannot

help themselves, but are forced to love darkness and to hate the light, being darkened into the devil's likeness (chap. viii. 44.) As in Isaiah, the judgment proclaimed against the people, in chapter vi., was incurred by them through the conduct for which they are rebuked in the foregoing chapter, so the blindness which has befallen Israel with relation to Jesus Christ, was incurred by them through their obstinate rejection of salvation when visited for light and life. The Acts of the Apostles, which sets forth Israel's self-hardening against the apostolic preaching of the Crucified and Risen Christ, closes with these very same prophetic words. Such is the awful course of the righteous judgment of hardening, from Esau and Pharaoh down to the last vessel of the wrath which is fitted to destruction. Man *himself hardens* his heart against the gracious voice of *God* which he *hears*—this is his *sin*; afterwards he *becomes* hardened, so that he is no longer able to *understand with his heart and to be converted*—this is his *punishment*: upon the sin of rejecting salvation there follows the punishment of incapability of being saved; upon unwillingness to believe there follows incapacity of believing. “For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath.” As *Augustine* beautifully expresses it: “God hardens not by imparting wickedness, but by withdrawing grace; He hardens by not softening, and blinds by not enlightening.” Another old commentator says (with reference to ver. 35): “The sun, when he sets, makes night; and so God makes men blind when He is not with them as their Light; but He is not with them to make them wicked.” Yes indeed, if we believe not while we have the light, darkness will come upon us, and what we lust after will destroy us. (Prov. i. 24, &c.)

After quoting this passage, these two passages from Isaiah, for his own confirmation in faith as well as for ours, St. John next enters fully into the Prophet's soul, while he adds:—

Ver. 41. "*These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory and spake of Him.*"

It was *Christ's* glory that Isaiah saw, when he saw in the Temple the LORD seated on a throne, high and lifted up, surrounded by adoring Seraphim; it was *Christ* of whom he spake when he said: "Mine eye hath seen the King, the LORD of Hosts." That which it was granted to the Prophet to behold in anticipation, it was vouchsafed to the Evangelist, who here speaks of Christ, to behold in actual reality, full of grace and truth; and accordingly he declares his own experience, as indeed the experience of all God's New Testament children, when he says, "*We saw His glory.*" What Isaiah said while he saw the glory of the Lord, St. John repeats, because, in the judgment of hardness laid upon the corrupt nation of Israel, he recognised a revelation of the Lord's glory as much as in the leaving of a holy seed to be a remnant. (Isa. vi. 13).

In the following words the Evangelist represents the people as having *desired* the blindness which had befallen them.

Ver. 42, 43. "*Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*"

The excommunication of the Pharisees terrified them more than communion with God's household allured them; fleeing from shame they loved the praise of man. Therefore it was that they could not become perfect in faith. This sentence, which St. John heard from the Lord's own mouth, he would never have pronounced upon a Nicodemus or a Joseph, for indeed he learned yet to know them as heroic confessors. No, not these weak ones are here meant, who gradually grew in faith, and waxed strong to confess in the hour when even the strong became weak; but they who are here meant are those insincere souls who, though they discerned the present working of the Light, yet stifled the faith which was germinating within them, because they loved darkness *more* than light—loved honour

with men, their carnal Jewish honour, more than honour with God. Let us take heed to this! Not only upon those who from the first oppose a stubborn and determined resistance to the Gospel, but even upon "believers" there may come a hardening, if they disown the power of faith, and refuse to "hate their life in this world." Yes, the hardening of such as have known the truth, and in displeasure turn their backs upon it, is the most fearful of all (2 Pet. ii. 21; Heb. vi. 4, &c).

The feeling of sorrow in consequence of the unbelief of his people, to which St. John here gives utterance, was working in his heart even at the time when, with the other disciples, he accompanied the Lord to Bethany (Mark xi. 11), although it was not till afterwards, when he saw that darkness had come over the people, that he felt in its full woe that lament over a rejected Saviour's love: "*Who hath believed our report?*" The Lord read the souls of the sorrowing disciples, and His love soon supplied them with a powerful antidote against the offence which the people's unbelief was ready to cause them. *First*, He strengthens their conviction that it was not in vain that they believed on Him (ver. 44-46); *next*, however, He illustrates the point that the judgment of those who believed not on Him is a righteous judgment, by showing that He has neglected nothing, that He might perform in the case of all men the command which He has received from the Father, that He should save the world unto eternal life (ver. 47-50). Certainly this passage clearly teaches us *who* they are whom God hardens, and *who* they are and on whom He has mercy; and ill would the Apostles have "continued in their Lord's words" if they had ever denied God's love in Christ to all mankind. The false doctrine of the Reformed Church in Germany respecting absolute decree of reprobation, hangs like a veil before the eyes of them who hold it, so that they cannot see the face of Christ beaming forth in these precious words. May He, the Lord, take the veil away!

Ver. 44, 45. "*Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on Me,*

believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that seeth Me, seeth Him that sent me."

As if He Had said: Be comforted! Let not your heart be troubled, because ye see Me despised above all other men! What I have said still holds good: "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life." You will never repent of your faith *in Me*; for in believing in Me it is not a man that you rely upon, but the true *God*. Ye believe *not on Me* as if I were *alone*, separate from the Father who has sent Me—as if I were come of Myself, with man's doctrine of My own; but ye believe on Me, who am One with the Father, and in whom the Father is present among you. What I have said is true: every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, hath everlasting life. For whoever in faith beholds Me, that man beholds the glory of God. For all did the incarnate Word reveal the glory of the invisible God; and all who saw the Son, saw in reality the Father; but they who "had not the love of God in them" knew Him not; it was only they who had the soul of a St. John that saw and contemplated the Word of Life manifest in the flesh. "Behold, with what eyes *faith* is gifted. She knows the Son of God when hanging at Mary's breast, and she knows Him too when hanging on the cross: yes, the thief knew Him on the cross, and the wise men knew Him in the stable—the one, when He was fastened with nails, the other, when He was wrapped in swaddling-clothes." (*Bernhard.*) Truly, the disciples were not mistaken in the Lord Christ, when they sought Light and Life in Him; of this He assures them when He adds:—

Ver. 46. "*I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness.*"

Like all sinners, they *were* once in darkness; but Christ came as a Light into the dark world, that none might *abide* in darkness, but might have the Light of Life. This was the blessed lot of the disciples. When St. John, in his Epistle, described the walk of God's children in the Light, he had himself realised

by rich experience the truth of Christ's "message" (1 John i. 5).

The Lord now leaves the blessing which rests upon faith, and turns to the curse which, He tells us, unbelief prepares for itself. Even this 46th verse contains in itself both the blessing and the curse. The sin that we *were* in darkness is forgiven us; but the sin of *abiding* in darkness, whilst the Light of Life shines upon us, leads to the judgment of eternal death.

Ver. 47, 48. "*And if any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*"

Thus decidedly does the Lord disown all share in the guilt which attaches to the perishing of those who abide in darkness, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am free from the blood of all men." This is the meaning of His words. Since all had *heard His words*, all might have believed on Him, for faith comes through hearing the word; but—"who hath believed our report?" They have not all obeyed the gospel (Rom. x. 16, 17). Now the disobedient and unbelieving *it is not I who judge*, Christ says. Not in *me*, but in *them* lies the cause of this judgment. "The unbeliever is a part of the *world*, which Christ came not to judge, but to save." (Bengel.) Not to condemn and judge did the Son of God come into the world, but to redeem and save; but he who *rejects* the Redeemer when he sees Him, and *receives not* His words which he hears, sees and hears *himself* his judgment, because he discerns not the word of the Lord. This property of becoming the judgment of those who reject it, the word has in common with the sacrament (2 Cor. ii. 16, 1 Cor. xi. 29). The word of Life, when rejected, irresistibly thrusts itself upon the unbeliever, as a word of judgment unto death: "*He hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day.*" How fearful an expression that is!—he *hath* one that judgeth him.

What would not he give to free himself from the judge? But he *hath* him and must appear before him. The word—the clear sum of all God’s words that he has ever heard—he can never entirely obliterate from his conscience; it clings to his feet wherever he goes, it lies down with him in his bed, it terrifies him in the rustling leaves of the tree, it accompanies him to his worldly business and his worldly pleasures, and everywhere it whispers in his ear, “Miserable thou art still!” It whispers now; but at the last day this judging word will sound upon him with the voice of thunder from the lips of that Son of Man whose redeeming love he has thrust from him; with unspeakable anguish will he recognise it as the same word to which, in the day of grace, he refused to hearken unto his salvation. But to them who believe there is nothing more consolatory than that they shall hear at the last day from the Judge’s mouth that very same word which was the confidence and only rule of their life. Therefore they desire to know no other God and Christ than is revealed in the *word*, and they feel assured that in the word they have Him as He is. “No created might can overturn the word: the bottom of hell has no power against it. Though I lay in the very jaws of the devil, yet let me lay hold of that, and I must come forth again, and abide where the word abides. Truly, then, it is a Divine power, *ay, it is God Himself.*” (*Luther.*) The eternal dignity of His word the Saviour establishes by what He adds in the concluding verses of the chapter.

Vers. 49, 50. “*For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.*”

Christ is the *faithful and true Witness*, who speaks that which He knows, and testifies what He has seen and heard—the only trustworthy Declarer of the secrets of the Father’s bosom. Again and again, therefore, He made the hearers of

His word answerable for their reception of it ; again and again He testified to them that it was not as one who presumptuously took the office of Prophet upon himself, but as *the* true Prophet which had been promised, as the faithful Revealer of the one true God (Deut. xviii. 18, 19). With great emphasis He says here, "*The Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak.*" "But this *commandment* we understand not as a commandment given from without, as to an inferior, but we understand it, after a fashion worthy of God—as the eternal passing over of volition from the Father to the Son—the Son in whom the Father's will is reflected, as the image of a form is reflected in a mirror." (*Basil.*) All that He *says* and *speaks*, every little saying of His mouth, as well as every discourse, all of it is without exception pure *word of God*: of Him, the personally eternal Word, that holds perfectly true which St. Peter inculcates upon the ministers of the word—whom in truth Christ sends as the Father sent Him :—"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." But the *substance* of all His saying and speaking is—*eternal life*. For to gain eternal life for us, and to impart it to us,—this is the commission which, for the glorification of the Divine name upon earth, Christ has to execute and fully to complete, This will and this commission which He received from the Father, the Son of God has obediently fulfilled. He gained eternal life for all when He gave up his life for all and took it again ; and in His word He gives eternal life to all who believe on Him, who as the Light receive Him into their souls. Whoever, then, despises Christ's word, despises eternal life and the word of eternal life will at the last day judge the children of eternal death, that the ancient prophecy might be fulfilled, "Whosoever will not hearken to my words which He shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." (Deut. xviii. 19.)

The Washing of the Disciples' Feet.

CHAPTER XIII. 1-20.

Ver. 1. *"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."*

It was now Thursday, the day before the feast. The Lord knew that on the following day He should die. He knew that He was now about to descend into the abyss of most bitter sufferings; He knew also that He was about to enter through the sufferings of death into the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Of this His soul was full. "These were high thoughts (says Luther) which might well have so withdrawn Him from the world as to have left no room in His mind even for His disciples." But yet He did think of them. Just as, when He might well have been happy in Heaven, Love brought Him down into the world; just as, when He was walking in the flesh amidst "strong crying and tears," it was His daily work to love *them* whose sins He bore: so was it also now; when He was longing to depart out of this world unto the Father, His heart turned in love towards His disciples who were to remain behind in the world. The overwhelming waters of His sufferings could not quench this love (Cant. viii. 7): "*Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*" These words St. John places as a heading to the Lord's converse with His disciples in these last hours. All that Jesus now

speaks and does is love, pure love. Yes, we have indeed a Christ who pleased not Himself! (Rom. xv. 3).

Ver. 2, 3. "*And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, he riseth from supper.*"

The master of the house was not present when the Lord came into his house with the twelve, neither was there any servant there, for the assembled family were also eating the passover-lamb at the same time. If there had been any one of the servants present, he would have performed the customary act of hospitality—that of washing the feet of the guests as they entered. But since there was no servant, one of the disciples must do it: But which of them? "*And there was a strife among them which of them should be accounted the greatest*" (St. Luke xxii. 24); not one of them was at first willing to perform the slave's office. This was not the first time that the followers of the Meek and Lowly One had striven for the highest place. It is a fearful proof of the strong hold which ambition has upon the human heart, that the disciples, after a three years' training in the school of humility, had yet made so little progress, that at such an hour as this they could feel disposed to begin quarrelling about precedence. For such disciples, such a Saviour was indeed necessary!

The Lord had already laid Himself down to table; now He rises up again. What at that moment was written on His holy countenance John, who saw it, has described to us. With deep sorrow He looked at Judas; for the devil had already filled his heart with treachery. No longer now could Judas be washed from his sin. But the eleven, who needed and were capable of receiving His cleansing love, *them* He would fain pluck out of the tempter's net. Whilst the Lord was proceeding to do the act of service to His disciples, He looked up to His Father, and His soul conversed with His Father. *He knew that he was*

come from God and went to God! He was come into the world, and the Father had given all things into his hand—the whole fallen world. He was leaving the world and going to his Father, bearing in His hand all things that the Father had given Him—the whole redeemed world. There, before Him, now stood the firstlings of His kingdom, the eleven who believed on Him. His love had long ago washed them (ver. 10), they were His, they were not of the world, and He was glorified in them (John xvii. 10, 14). But that the world still clung to them was shown even now by their greediness for empty honour. And now, once more behold Him, the Lord Jesus, into whose hand the Father had given all things, who was come from the Father's bosom, and was now going to the Father's right hand on His eternal throne, and then read what follows:—

Ver. 4, 5. *“And he laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.”*

As John thus slowly and solemnly lingers over each particular! “He began” As often as I read these words, I always fancy a *Selah* there, and make a pause; for they demand a thoughtful and meditative posture of the soul, an adoring frame of mind. “He into whose hands the Father had given all things, with those same hands washes, not the hands, but the feet of His disciples.” (Augustine.)

John the Baptist deemed himself not worthy to unloose the latchet of the shoes of Jesus: and this Jesus deems Himself not too high—not to unloose the shoes, but—to wash the feet of His disciples. Who could have ventured to believe it possible if the Lord had not actually done it? Verily, the heart of man never could have imagined such a scene! All that the world can show that is great and high vanishes into nothing before this lowliness!

“Let us now put together His thoughts and His work. His thoughts are: I am God and Lord over all; another day will

not pass before the Devil will have wrought out all that is in his power to do ; after that, he, together with all my enemies, shall lie at my feet, and shall leave my Christians in peace. But what is the work ? He, the Lord of lords, does that which the servants and maids of the family are wont to do, and washes His disciples' feet." (Luther.) Yes, He *loved* His own even to the end. He is the *Friend* who *loveth* at all times (Prov. xvii. 17.)

Ver. 6-9. *Then cometh he to Simon Peter : and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."*

It is the opinion of an ancient Father of the Church, and it may have been so, that Jesus knelt down first before Judas, who had pressed forward to the highest seat. Judas allowed his feet to be washed ; his heart trembled, but it was not broken ; mute and unmoved he sat there. Fear and astonishment must have seized upon the other disciples. But when the Lord came to His Peter, and knelt down before him, Peter could no longer restrain himself, and exclaimed—" *Lord, dost thou wash my feet ?*" *Thou, Lord, my feet?* Ah, Lord, stop ; I am a sinful man. At these words of Peter one has the feeling that just the same are hovering upon one's own lips ; but they give one also the opportunity of making it clear, whether we have learnt the difference between nature and grace.

It was a natural virtue in the disciple that he was too modest to have such a service done to him by his Lord. But eyes which have been enlightened by grace can discover the proud and crooked self-will which lies hidden under such modesty. Or do we not daily need our Saviour's condescending service ? True, Peter as yet did not understand the meaning of this feet-washing ; yet, though blindfold, he should have submitted to the Lord. But even when our Lord tells him, that though he knows

not now, yet that hereafter he shall know what He is now doing to him, he still refuses to submit : "*To all eternity thou shalt not wash my feet !*" he says ; and his words sound as if he would say : "Even if all the others have so little feeling of reverence as to allow Thee to wash their feet, yet mine Thou shalt never wash !" Then the Lord gives him at once a slight hint of the meaning of what He is doing, and says to him : "*If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*" This at last carries the disciple away, for whither should he go if he were to have no part with Him who was his Life ? Vehement as he was in refusing, he is now still more vehement in submitting. He answers in the language of devoted love,—love which, though inconsiderate, is yet love, perfect love : "*Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head !*" Do with me as Thou wilt, so only as I have part with Thee !" Yes—"wash me, that I may be whiter than snow." (Ps. li. 7).

Ver. 10, 11. "*Jesus saith to Him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit : and ye are clean but not all. For He knew who should betray Him ; therefore said He, Ye are not all clean.*"

With these words the Lord subdues the violent emotion of His disciple's love into silent propriety, giving us also a key to the right understanding of this symbolical action. Both his hands and his head Peter had presented to be washed ; but they had already been washed in the customary bath. By this simile the Lord means to say, that,—Just as one who has wholly cleansed himself in the bath needs only afterwards to wash his feet in order to cleanse them from the dust which they have gathered in walking : so ye who have been justified by faith in Me, and been washed from sin, need nothing further than to allow yourselves to be cleansed through My love from these specks of sin which will continue to defile you so long as you are in the world. But this continual purification is necessary ; for he who does not *choose* to be cleansed from every individual act of unfaithfulness by which he is surprised, and from the

secret faults which I reveal to him, he forfeits all and has no part with Me. (Concerning this twofold purification: that which is once performed through *justification*, and that which takes place daily through *sanctification*, the Lord speaks also in St. John xv. 2, 3; He says: "Now ye *are clean*," and yet at the same time "He purgeth them." Compare also 1 Cor. v. 7; Rom. vi. 2 and 12.) Now, here is something of especial importance. *The bath of justification comes first; the washing of sanctification follows after.* He who has *not* been washed in the bath, who, through faith and repentance, by virtue of the forgiveness of sins which is offered in the saving water of baptism, has not been made *wholly clean*, so clean, that God regards him as perfectly righteous (Eph. v. 26, 27; 1 Cor. vi. 11): to that man no washing of the feet is of any avail; nothing can help him; even though he may outwardly forsake this or that sin, sanctification he *can* not attain. For to sanctification a reconciled heart is indispensable; and he who with an unreconciled heart seeks to adorn and beautify himself, is like a man who never washes his face, while he anxiously dusts his feet. Thus, in the case of Judas, the washing of his feet availed him nought. When the Lord said, "*Ye are clean*," He looks at the traitor, and adds, "*But not all.*" Him the Lord could not help, for not only with his feet, but with his hands and his head, with his whole man, was this child of perdition wallowing in the mire of sin.

Let us hear what *Augustine* says: "In holy Baptism a man is wholly washed. But afterwards, by living amongst the things of this world, we tread the ground with our feet. Human feelings and emotions, without which we cannot live in this mortal state, are, as it were, the feet which gather up the dust of this earth, and thereby are become so polluted, that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Hence, daily our feet are washed by Him who is our Advocate with the Father, and who intercedes for us; and daily we confess that we have need of this feet-washing, when we pray,—

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And where we make this confession, then He who washed His disciples' feet is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And this is a great comfort to believers, for they know that their heart belongs to the Lord Jesus (and though their faith be ever so weak, was it not also at first in the disciples but a very tender plant?), but they are also painfully aware that they daily sin much, because to their feet, on which they walk through the world, everything is but too ready to cling. When he whose heart in Christ is clean prays that his impure feet may be washed, he is then cleansed through the blood of Christ from all his daily sins (1 John i. 7).

Therefore it is that we go to confession and confess our sins; and so often as we receive absolution, it is as if Jesus were washing our feet. Confession before partaking of the holy Sacrament answers to the washing of the disciples' feet before the institution of the Holy Supper; and this also the Fathers teach us. No unwashed person may eat of this holy feast (1 Cor. xi. 28); and mercy and forgiveness are not *obtained* through the sacrament, but *appropriated*.

We may, however, say that in the Supper itself the gift of feet-washing is granted to us; so that Baptism and the Supper, the bath, and the washing of the feet, stand here in the same relation to one another, as Eph. v. 25, &c.: "The holy Feast is the disciples' purification from their daily sins, the feet-washing of their souls; just as Baptism is nothing less than a washing of the whole body through which we are cleansed both from what we inherit from Adam, and what we ourselves have added. The power and use of Baptism continues even to the end; and it is that through which our whole life and being, even to the latest breath, is maintained in a state of sonship with God. The holy Feast takes away from us the evil conscience which we feel at the close of each day; it makes us cheerful and happy in the midst of this life's misery, where every day must have its own

plague, even if it were for no other reason than because every day has its own sins and its own evil conscience. Baptism brings us out of the world into God's kingdom, into His House and Temple ; it raises up God's walls round about us, and builds over us the roof of His everlasting peace ; but the holy Supper is to us who dwell in God's house an ever renewed assurance that our God, the God of our baptism, yet lives, and that His goodness is new every morning. So long as we are cleansed from the evil conscience of our daily life, the peace of our baptism is preserved to us. The forgiveness of daily sins, God's precious Body and Blood, which we receive as the pledge and seal of forgiveness, prevents our falling away from the consolation of true faith, and is a perpetual assurance to us that we are His, His alone." (Löhe).

But it is also a word of solemn meaning, an antidote to all light thoughts of sin, this word : "*If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*" It is the same as the Apostle Paul says : "Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," (Heb. xii. 14. Compare also 2 Cor. vii. 1, and 2 Pet. i. 9.)

In one sense, the washing of the disciples' feet had a peculiar reference to them as being apostles. "For as the high priest Aaron and his sons were commanded to wash their hands and their feet before they entered the tabernacle (Ex. xxx. 19), so Christ would fain wash the feet of his new Levites before they entered upon their office of preaching." (W. J. Konig.) Erhardt Schneff used to say, that on entering the pulpit he looked in three different directions : *beneath*, at his feet, that in humility and in the example of all goodness he might go before his congregation ; *above*, at the church's vaulted roof, that he might say nought to offend the Majesty of Heaven ; *around*, on the people, that he might dispense to them the word with truth and plainness.

Ver. 12-17. "*So after he had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you ? Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and*

Master, have washed your feet ; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord ; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

We know what kind of dust it was that was even now clinging to the disciples' feet—that of vain ambition. From this pollution the Saviour's love was cleansing them ; whilst meekly humbling Himself, He was imprinting meekness and lowliness upon their now purified heart. Thus, we ever find in Christ the opposite virtue to every vice which He pardons in us ; and because, so often as we are forgiven aught, we embrace Him wholly, it cannot be otherwise. The forgiveness of sin is also the gift of the power of sanctification. This is the connexion between the gift of feet-washing which Christ alone imparts, and the command of feet-washing which all His disciples were to follow. For he says : "*If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*" It is important to every Christian that he should know what he is here commanded to do. Are we literally and outwardly to wash one another's feet ? Certainly, if so be that our brother's feet need this service of love. In that case, we must not shrink from doing it, nor consider the hands too nice for such an office. As also St. Paul says, in enumerating the good works which should characterise a widow, "*If she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet*" (1 Tim. v. 10). But it is also equally certain, that whoever serves his brother in self-denying love is obeying this command of the Lord, in whatever way he may be called upon to do it, whether it be by washing his feet, or whether it be by filling his hand, or whether it be by drying from his eyes the tears, or whether it be by watching and praying for his soul. It is not *what* we do which weighs, so much as the *mind* with which we do. And this the disciples and the first

Christians, who glowed with brotherly love, well knew. They drew from this feet-washing no literal law, but have sought to enter into the spirit of Him who, Lord over all, yet dwelt among His own as a servant, to whom no lowliness was so lowly that the height of His love did not stoop down thereunto.

The Pope to this day washes on Maundy Thursday the feet of twelve poor men ;—does he thereby quiet his conscience about this word of the heavenly King : “ *The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors : but ye shall not be so ?* ” Which feet-washing is the most acceptable to the Lord, this at Rome, or that which is done in silence and retirement upon His poor and sick ones by those who are well known to Him ? “ Therefore, it is not the feet-washing which is done with water that is meant ; for otherwise, if it were only a question of washing and of water, people would be much better served if a common bath were erected for them, and if not only their feet, but their whole body were washed. But this is not the meaning.”

“ Dost thou desire to follow Christ’s example and wash thy neighbour’s feet ? Then look to it that thou humble thyself from thy heart ; that thou employ all the gifts and graces which thou dost possess, not to thine own profit or to thine own honour, but for the good of thy neighbour ; that thou despise none, ay, that thou even seek to excuse each one’s weakness, and that thou help him to become better. That is the man whom the Lord Jesus Christ especially loves and honours. And by doing this we shall most effectively guard ourselves from the snares of the Devil. And the especial temptation which the Devil employs with preachers, is that of making them seek their own honour and advantage. If that takes effect, he has won. Let no minister of the Church think himself secure from this temptation ; and to guard against it let him ever fix his thoughts upon this feet-washing, and practise it unceasingly.”

“ In our high and solemn office, it cannot fail but that one man has this gift, another that. Only happy is that man who is not high-minded, but who, with the Lord Jesus Christ, rises from

table, girds himself, and washes another's feet ; that is, who by his gifts serves his neighbour and not himself."

"In a secondary sense, this feet-washing also means that we forgive one another's faults, and, as St. Paul expresses it in Gal. vi. 2, *bear one another's burdens*. Compare also Rom. xv. 1. In no other way can we get on ; for in the whole world thou wilt not find a Christian so pure, as that he shall not have some especial fault or infirmity. And then thou thinkest that, if it were not for this or that fault, thou wouldst gladly associate with him. Now hearken ; when thou observest some fault, whether it be in thy master, or in thy wife or child, or in thy companion or neighbour, then do thou wash his feet ; that is, overlook that fault of his, and try whether thou canst not bring him right ; and remember, what is indeed the truth, that this world is no better than a filthy sty, through which it is impossible that we can pass without soiling our feet. It is so with me, it is so with thee ; in short, it is so with all the world. What, then, would we do ? Would we on that account retreat to a desert, or take refuge in a wilderness, and hold fellowship with none ? No. Since thou must wash thy neighbour's feet, thou canst not dwell alone, but in the midst of people, amongst those who are wading through this impure and filthy world." (L.)

What shame must now have filled the disciples' minds ! They had been striving which of them should be accounted greatest ; and behold, He who was greatest among them—their Lord—had risen from table, and had served them ! They had wandered away into the world, where *ruling* and *serving* are separate things ; but now Jesus's serving Love was writing in their hearts this fundamental principle in the kingdom of God, namely, that every office, even the highest, the *apostolic* office, is appointed to *serve*. How easy this to *learn*, but how difficult to *do* ! "*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*" Knowest thou wherefore it is that the Lord has expressly added that to this command of mutual feet-washing ? It is in order that we might allow the old sting to be drawn out from our

conscience, making us feel that we are unhappy people because we have so long *known* the Lord's will, and yet have not *done* it. "Herein lies your happiness, that ye serve in my kingdom instead of ruling in the world." (Brenz). Oh, let us seek to know from experience how happy it is to be disciples of the Master of serving Love!

Ver. 18, 19. "*I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.*"

"*Happy are ye,*" the Lord had said; and He saw them already happy, for He knew that His love would bring them to do what He had commanded them. But not all. How could that disciple wash his brethren's feet, who was lifting up his heel against his Lord? Therefore He added: "*I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen,*"—alas! that I cannot pronounce *all* of you happy!—"but that the scripture may be fulfilled, *He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.*" Twelve had the Lord *chosen*; but one of them had given himself up to the devil, and instead of making his calling and election sure, had merited rejection. He was eating bread with Jesus, and at the same time was lifting up his heel against Him. This was horrible; but that must be fulfilled which was shadowed forth in the sufferings of God's servants under the Old Dispensation. It is what the servants of God *must* suffer, because they are in the world, and the world hates them and persecutes them. By God's especial appointment it was that David—he who, of all the saints in the Old Testament, was most a type, or, so to speak, a trial of Christ, the Perfect Saint—that he in particular was to experience the bitter grief of being betrayed by his friend whom he trusted (Ahitophel), as he complains in Ps. xli. The antitype of David was not to lack the antitype of Ahitophel. In the course of the narrative of the Passion, we shall frequently see that the Saviour strengthens *Himself*, as well as the faith of His *disciples*, by the example and pattern of the Old Testament servants of God;

He strengthens *Himself*, for in the leadings of God and sufferings which they were the subjects of, which coincided with His, He could recognise this very way of His own in which the Father was calling upon Him to walk, and in which was to be gathered up every single experience of the former servants of God, and by this recognition strengthen Himself in this career of faith, till, as man, He should be made perfect, (Heb. v. 9); whilst to the *disciples*, that which otherwise they might not have understood, only served to strengthen their faith, when they perceived that their Lord was walking step by step in the way which had before been pointed out by the Holy Ghost.

What a support must it have been to the disciples, when the treachery of Judas was revealed to them, to remember that the Lord had told them of it before! (Comp. John xiv. 29, xvi. 4.) And when, in this our time, we too have to see so many who eat the bread of Christ and His Church, yet lifting up their heel against Him, instead of washing His feet in His members, let us be on our guard against taking offence, remembering that: Thus it must be! For just as Christ is the same both yesterday and to-day, so also is Antichrist. "It cannot but be so: where Christ is, there must likewise be Judas and Pilate, and Herod, and Caiaphas, and Annas; there, too, must be His cross; otherwise it is not the true Christ." (Luther.)

Ver. 20. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*"

The glance at the traitor had for a moment straitened the Saviour's heart, overflowing with love to "His own;" the happiness which they should find in following Him had reminded Him of the unhappiness of this son of perdition. But now again He addresses Himself to the eleven. No part of their apostolic powers was to be impaired because this one had disgraced the name of His election, and was on the road to perdition. As He has bidden them to follow Him in His humility, He likewise gives them a share in His glory; *they*

are not to esteem themselves greater than their Lord who sent them, and, on the other hand, He will not esteem them whom He has sent as less than He Himself is: as He is, so shall they be in the world, in a servant's garb possessing eternal glory. He who receives the Lord Jesus in His poverty and lowliness, receives His heavenly Father; in the same way, in the poor servants of the Church whom the world despises, their Lord is received, the Lord of glory. And this hidden glory will hereafter break out into kingly splendour in Christ's eternal kingdom: even as He, after having endured temptation, has entered into the kingdom prepared by his Father, so likewise shall they who have suffered with Him in time, reign with Him in eternity.

One of you shall Betray Me.

CHAPTER XIII. 21-30.

ALL the while that the Lord was eating this farewell Passover with His disciples, He was filled with a longing for that feast in His kingdom where His own whom He loved should be His guests to all eternity (Luke xxii. 16, 18, 30). But behold! at that table one of the disciples should be wanting—the *betray*er, whose hand was with Jesus on the table—that same hand which had already received the thirty pieces of silver.

Ver. 21, 22. “*When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake.*”

“*He was troubled in spirit.*” Not the agony which was soon to rack His holy body, no, nor the pains of hell which must seize His holy soul,—it was not this which occasioned Him the sorrow with which His spirit was now troubled. With desire had He desired to eat this Passover with His disciples: and, behold, amongst these disciples there was one sitting at table with Him who was even then betraying Him! It was this spectacle that now wrung from the Lord the mournful testimony: “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me!*” He does not address Judas, and say, “*Thou shalt betray me,*” He says, “*One of you.*” Yet once more does He stretch forth the arms of His love—that Love which had chosen *the twelve*, and borne them till now with more than a mother’s tenderness—towards this son of perdition. “*Rather*

will he frighten all, than that the one should lose this last impulse to repentance," says Chrysostom. This "*One of you!*" could not fail to pierce like an arrow through the heart of that disciple who was this one. And perhaps for a moment he caught at this opportunity of freeing himself from the power of Satan; for a moment he may have been at variance with the enemy to whom he had delivered himself up; but only, alas! to fall away again into his slavery without hope of deliverance. As Jesus was thus speaking, Judas, perhaps, may not have raised his eyes; but his fellow-disciples looked around at each other, and one after the other asked the anxious question, "*Lord, is it I?*" Am *I* to be the one? Ah, surely, Lord, it is not I? What a view we have here into the heart of the disciples! They love their Lord, and shrink back with horror from such a deed of villany; but from the bitter feeling of their weakness they tremble *at themselves*, and each one—though, indeed, Peter did not join in their asking, or if he did, it was in a different tone—each one seeks from Jesus the comforting assurance, "No, it is not thou!" Him they are willing to trust, themselves not. And is not this remarkable circumstance, that not one among them knew of whom the Lord spoke, well calculated to put us to the blush? Alas! *we* probably should have known, or at least have guessed. These honest disciples were more occupied with themselves than we commonly are; *they* had no leisure for hunting out the marks of insincerity in their fellow-disciple, and when the Lord uttered severe words, *their* custom was to smite upon their own breasts. May God help us also daily towards this same frame of mind! When we read in Scripture, "Many will seek to enter in at the strait gate, and shall not be able" (Luke xiii. 24), or, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, then will I profess unto thee, I never knew thee" (Matt. vii. 22); or, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. xxiv. 12); but especially, when we are preparing ourselves for the celebration of the Holy Supper, which was instituted by Christ on the

night of His betrayal ; then let us fain examine our own selves ; let us carry our souls before the Lord, and seek from Him comfort ; whilst with fear and trembling we ask, "*Lord, is it I ?*" This is what is meant by working out our salvation with fear and trembling.

The Lord veils His answer to this question of His trembling disciples in patient forbearance towards His betrayer. "The fashion of the world is to love the treachery, and to hate the traitor. But Christ reverses this—He abhors the treachery, whilst He seeks to save the traitor's soul, because it is dear to Him." (J. Gerhard.)

Ver. 23, 24. "*Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake.*"

Peter cannot rest contented until he distinctly hears that his Lord does not deem *him* capable of such a deed. And who will venture to say that in this the disciple's passionate love to his Master does not conspicuously shine ? Yet when we reflect upon what afterwards occurred, it is certain, that of all the disciples Peter was the most prone to think that he stood, and plumed himself the most upon his love. But his turning to John with the question, "*Say, who is it of whom He speaks ?*" (for so, according to the best reading of the original Greek, it runs) evidently supposes, that *he* must know ; which plainly shows that John not only lay next to Jesus at table, but that he also lay nearest His heart. The Lord, indeed, loved all His disciples ; but John *permitted himself to be more loved than all the others*. His heart was a large vessel for holding the love of Jesus—it was not so by nature (indeed he, together with James, was a son of thunder, Mark iii. 17) ; but it had *become* so in the Lord's school. He, more than any other, resembles Mary, she who sat at Jesus' feet. That he was the disciple *whom Jesus loved*—that he lay on Jesus' breast—this was the delight of his life : upon the Lord's breast (the old fathers tell

us) did he suck in the heavenly wisdom from whence his Gospel has sprung. "And if I am to think (says Zinzendorf) what John was doing on the Lord's-day (Rev. i. 10), wherefrom the giving of the Revelation came, what else could it well have been, but conversing with Him who was once his next neighbour at table?" Wouldst thou fain come very near to Jesus, and even lie on His breast? then seek Him diligently in John's Gospel, and, in company with the disciple whom Jesus loved, behold His glory—a glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Ver. 25. "*He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto Him, Lord, who is it?*"

Not even John knew who it was of whom Jesus spake: so reticent has been the love of this most faithful Shepherd of souls, so long as a single hope of life yet remained on behalf of this son of perdition! Bending still closer to Jesus the disciple softly asks, "*Lord, who is it?*" And He who of old time had not been able to hide from Abraham His secrets, because Abraham was His friend (Gen. xviii. 17), now whispers into the ear of the disciple whom He loved:

Ver. 26. "*He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him.*"

This was the moment in which Judas exchanged his marriage-ring of hell with the devil, to whom he had before betrothed himself (Luke xxii. 3). "After the sop (says St. John), Satan entered into him." Judas was not *possessed*; rather he himself possessed the devil's will. He had been deliberately, step by step, opening his heart to Satan, until now at length he had become wholly of one mind with the arch-enemy of Jesus Christ. "As the increase of faith is called faith, and to receive the Holy Ghost means to become partaker of higher gifts thereof (Luke xi. 13; John xx. 22): so does Satan enter into godless men, when he increases the wickedness in their hearts,

and strengthens them to continue in their sins." (J. Gerhard.)

This: "*Satan entered into him,*" is the exact opposite of what the children of God experience when the Father and the Son come, and, in the Holy Ghost, take up their abode within them.

Ver. 27. "*Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.*"

"That which Judas had already inwardly done, he would yet not have had power to do outwardly, if, through this word, the Lord had not as it were given him leave." (Hilarius.) Another father of the Church says, that the Lord is here speaking to the devil in Judas. This also is true. When Jesus saw that Judas and Satan could now no longer be separated, *He gave him up*, and drove him speeding into the darkness: Depart, then, I will no longer detain thee. It is like that last word which Moses spake to Pharaoh in Ex. x. 29. And so, at the last day, will He bid away from Him those who stand on His left hand, and with the rapidity of lightning will His word take effect: "Depart into everlasting fire!"

Ver. 28, 29, 30. "*Now no man at the table knew for what intent He spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.*"

The disciples knew not what the deed was which Judas meant to do, and soon would do; even John and Peter did not understand; for that Judas should betray Jesus *on this very night* did not enter their minds. Some thought that he should buy something for the feast. Ah, they little knew what a sacrifice that was which, through the hand of Judas, was to be purchased for this feast! Judas however had understood; having received the sop he went immediately out—and it was night; night also in the heart of this son of perdition; for no ray of grace from

Jesus' face could any longer penetrate there. And soon "the power of darkness" rushed in (Luke xxii. 53). Compare the two other passages in St. John's Gospel, where the time when salvation is no longer to be had is shadowed forth by *night*, in chap. ix. 4, and xi. 10; and thence the glory of the New Jerusalem, where there is no more night, in Rev. xxii. 5.

The Cock shall not Crow till thou hast denied
Me thrice.

CHAPTER XIII. 33-38.

THE Song of Praise, namely, the great Hallelujah, as the six Psalms from the hundred and thirteenth to the hundred and eighteenth were called, had now, according to the custom of the Feast, ended the Passover meal. What feelings must have stirred the hearts of the disciples, as they repeated that song concerning the *cup of salvation* (Ps. cxvi. 13), when they had even now been drinking of the cup of the Lord's Supper! And with regard to the hundred and eighteenth Psalm (of which Luther says: "This is *my* Psalm, the Psalm which I love"), with what increased power does it penetrate the heart with the sweetness of its consolation, when we remember that it was the prayer which the Saviour offered up when about to enter upon the conflict of His suffering, in order that, after His victory, this might become a new song of triumph in the tabernacles of the righteous!

The Lord and His disciples had now risen from table, and, as they were preparing to leave the house, He said:

Ver. 33, 34, 35. "*Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say unto you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.*"

He had indeed bequeathed His presence with them when

giving Himself wholly to them in the Holy Supper; yet He knew that the eyes of the disciples—those poor, weak, *little children*—were yet clinging to His *visible* presence; and He therefore wished to prepare them for the hour which was now come, when every sensible consolation would be taken from them, and the sword of which Simeon had prophesied (Luke ii. 35) would pierce through their own souls also. “*Whither I go, ye cannot come.*” Twice had the Lord said this to the unbelieving Jews (John vii. 34; viii. 21); and *now* He says the same thing to His “*little children,*”—though indeed with a very different meaning. The enemies of Jesus Christ shall *die in their sins*, and therefore cannot see the Life and the Glory into which Christ has entered; but the disciples who loved Christ, but were verily yet offended at His cross, could not now find the way by which Christ was passing through suffering into glory. But they did afterwards find this chosen path of suffering and glory; the search of their love was not in vain. Yes, even here upon earth, when with their bodily eyes they could not see their glorified Lord, they were yet made conscious of His nearness to them, whilst they were living in the kingdom of *Love* as His true disciples, as members of the Church, of the Holy Supper.

St. John writes: “No man hath seen God at any time; if we love one another, God dwelleth in us” (1 John iv. 12). This is the connexion between the Lord’s departure, whereby He hides Himself even from the eyes of His disciples, and the *new commandment*, the commandment of *brotherly love*, by the fulfilment of which His dwelling amongst them is made known. The *new commandment* belongs to the *new covenant*. Here let us read what the disciple of love writes concerning this new commandment of brotherly love—new, though equally old with the Gospel—in chap. ii. of his Epistle. In the command of the New Testament, “Love one another, as Christ also hath loved you,” the command of the Old Testament, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” appears again in a new and

restored form. Christ, and Christ alone, has perfectly fulfilled this commandment, the fulfilment of which the Apostle Paul calls the fulfilment of *the whole law* (Rom. xiii. 8): he therefore who loves his brother as Christ has loved him, fulfils aright the command of love to one's neighbour. On this account also may the command of brotherly love be called *new*, because it is not to be like the Old Testament command, a witness *against* those who cannot fulfil it (Deut. xxxi. 26), but rather, a witness and sign *for* them who in its fulfilment find their greatest joy and delight; for what is more blessed than to be permitted to love as Christ loves? This ever new command is *true*; it is something real, something actually realised and accomplished, in Christ and in Christians (1 John ii. 8).

Ver. 36, 37, 38. "*Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice.*"

Peter had hardly heard the Lord's last words; his heart rebelled against the thought that he could not go wherever his Lord should go; and he asks, "*Lord, whither goest Thou?*" He had indeed understood of what departure the Lord was speaking; at any rate, he had gathered from His words that He was going away; this is proved by the offer which he presently after makes to lay down his life for Him; but how glad he would have been if he had misunderstood Him! (Matt. xvi. 22). The Lord repeats His word; but this time He comforts His disciple by adding, "*Thou shalt follow Me afterwards.*" Comp. John xxi. 19, 22. But Peter insists on the *Now*, and is ready to lay down his life for Jesus. Why art thou in such haste, Peter? The Rock has not yet made thee strong through

His Spirit!" (Augustine.) "*Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake?*" the Lord says. Oh no, Simon, not *thou* for *My sake*, but *I* for *thy sake*! And now He opens the eyes first of Peter, then of all the disciples, to look into the bitter hours of temptation which lay before Him. This He does to humble them, and at the same time, that He may extend to them the hand by which they should be able to rise up again when about to sink.

The other disciples are struck dumb with surprise by the words which Christ then speaks to them, and which are on this point more fully given to us in St. Luke (xxii. 35-38); but St. Peter cannot be silent; he exclaims: "*Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never*" (Matt. xxii. 33)! His heart is ready to burst at the thought that Jesus considers him capable of such perfidy, when he himself feels so sure that for his Lord's sake he would gladly die. And who is there that would dare dispute the disciple's love to his Master? Jesus had taken away his heart; whither, then, should he go, if not to Him (John vi. 68)? But what the Lord had just been saying to him, that His intercession for him would be his only hope of deliverance from the shipwreck of his faith, could not as yet have sunk very deep into his heart. As yet, he knew not how necessary to him was his Saviour's intercession. How, otherwise, could he have raised himself so high above his fellow-disciples as to say, "I cannot, indeed, answer for them, but of myself I feel quite sure?" Afterwards it proved that he might rather have said: "Though none shall be offended because of Thee, yet shall I!" We will not now penetrate further into the heart of the disciple; this we will do when we come to the account of his fall. Certain it is that Satan laughed when he heard Peter thus boasting of his faithfulness. But the Lord, who knows us better than we know ourselves, now tells His confident disciple whither he is tending; on this very night, ay, before the cock shall have crowed, he will deny Him thrice! The "offence" which was in his heart would break out into sin of the mouth.

We are met here by two questions—*First*, Was Peter *constrained* to fall into sin because Christ foretold that he would? God forbid! The Lord says: Thou, Simon, thou, as thou art now, not Peter, but Simon, shalt betray Me. It was the posture of the disciple's heart which caused his denial, and that posture of his heart Christ now saw through. At any moment he was at liberty to free himself from the bands of his pride through repentance, and thereby to be kept from falling. But in truth Christ foresaw that Peter would continue just *this very* Simon until the second crowing of the cock; and therefore it is that He speaks in so unqualified a manner.

The *second* question is: Why does the Lord particularly refer the disciple to the *crowing of the cock*, instead of saying, Before to-morrow's dawn? The answer to this we shall find in the issue of the narrative. The cock, with his penetrating watch-cry, was commissioned to be a preacher of repentance to the fallen disciple. There is a peculiar Saviour's gentleness in the Lord's treatment of His disciple during this night. But this we have to consider still more particularly presently.

Peter has the audacity to defy even this word of the Lord, and in vain self-confidence to exclaim: "Rather die than deny." Instead of praying to be helped and guarded, he will have it that he is in no danger. Behold, *that* was just the Simon whose fall the Lord foresaw, and spoke of as certain.

And now, the other disciples also would not be outdone by this valiant one, and so they vie with each other in exclaiming, Rather die than deny! But the Lord remained silent. "Oh, it is sad when Jesus is constrained to keep silence before thee, and thou art asserting thine own self! It will be sure not to last long; such self-asserting thou wilt have to bewail with many tears. If thou wilt not believe the faithful words which Jesus speaks, thou wilt soon have to learn by bitter facts, and the sooner the better, if by them thou art brought back again into the path of attention, of obedience, and of humility." (Diedrich.) But yet, overlaid as it was by the chaff of natural

love and vain self-confidence, the Lord recognised the noble grain of faith which had been planted in the disciples by His Heavenly Father, and therefore He chides them not, but prays for them.

And thou, my dear brother, ask thyself upon what *thy* confidence is grounded. "Satan has a quiver full of poisoned arrows. Knowest thou which of them is the most deadly? It is trust and confidence towards thyself. See to it that he does not wound thee thereby; for in the wound will grow the proud flesh of security; and that afterwards festers into what? Presumption." (Cober.)

Let not your Heart be troubled.

CHAPTER XIV. 1-14.

THE thirteenth chapter of our Gospel belongs entirely to the history of the Passion. But the inscription which St. John has written over the door through which he leads us to the devout consideration of the Lord Jesus' sufferings: "*Having loved his own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end,*" embraces also the contents of the four chapters (xiv.-xvii.) into which, in the *History of the Passion*, we only throw a hasty glance, and on whose sweet manna, with the help of the promised Comforter, we desire more fully to repast. The evangelist has portrayed Jesus before our eyes as the *Word*, the *Life*, the *Light*; and now, that our joy may be full, he shows Him to us as *Love*,—as Him who reveals His glory in *love to His own*.

Even during the paschal supper, the Lord spoke words of consolation to His eternally beloved ones; and it is certainly entirely in accordance with St. John's meaning (chap. xiii. 3) that Löhe, in his beautiful sermon on *the washing of the disciples' feet*, says: "Only for a day is it night; what is born from this night is eternal,—the kingdom of grace and compassion. Therefore, also, in taking leave of His own, He does it, not as one whose day is setting, whose time is coming to an end, but He gives them an ordinance, which is to have in His kingdom an ever-enduring validity, even as long as the sun and moon shall endure."

It is the *Lord* who is acting and speaking, the Lord, whose *hour of glorification* is come (chap. xiii. 31, 32). As the Lord of glory, as the Son of man, who hath life in himself through the living Father, whose flesh and blood *is* and *works* spirit and life, He instituted also the sacrament of His body and blood ; blessing His people through this pledge of His eternal presence, in order that they might have a more abundant experience of the virtue of His high-priestly words : “ *I am glorified in them—I in them and Thou in Me.*”

After the supper He said : “ *Little children, yet a little while I am with you.*” They should receive Him (it is true) in the sacrament, and in *that* way He would abide with them, even to the end of the world ; but as their earthly eyes beheld Him, in *that* way He was to be but a little while with them. And this little while His love desired to turn to account, that He might introduce them, and all who should believe on Him through their word, into the peace which the legacy of His everlasting indwelling in them, sealed to them in the holy sacrament, was to bestow. During this little while He spoke that which has ever since flowed through the Church of His “own,” as an exhaustless stream of peace and life, for which we shall praise Him until His coming again. “This is, indeed, the best and most comforting sermon which the Lord Jesus ever delivered upon earth ; and St. John is especially to be prized above the other evangelists, for having laid hold of this discourse, and left it behind him for the comfort of Christendom,—a treasure and a jewel with which nothing that the world has to offer can be compared ; loss, indeed, it would have been, and most highly to be lamented, if such a sermon had remained unrecorded, and we had been robbed of such a treasure. For herein are the most delicious, the most condescending, and the sweetest words of consolation which our dear faithful Saviour ever uttered, and which He now gives to His beloved disciples at the last, when He is about to leave them ; it is here that He has profusely poured out every high heartfelt consolation which is possessed

by Christendom viewed as a whole, and which any individual man shall want in all his needs and sorrows." (Luther.) He said to His disciples :

Ver. 1. "*Let not your heart be troubled* [alarmed]: *ye believe in God, believe also in me.*"

"*Let not your heart be troubled.*" These words we have made the heading to the portion which we shall consider to-day. Yet, in fact, this particular clause contains likewise the true heading to the whole consolatory discourse ; for it flows on in one channel of love, and ends at last with the word, "*Be of good cheer!*" (chap. xvi. 33).

Thus, the farewell discourse joins hands with the farewell discourse which Moses gave to the people of Israel, when to them he addressed similar words: "Be of good courage!" (Deut. xxxi. 6, 7). But here is One, more than Joshua, promised to be "another Comforter."

The Lord's words concerning His departure had *troubled*, had alarmed the disciples ; so He desires now to console them for His departure, by discoursing of it in such a way that their trouble may be changed into peace, their sorrow into joy. *Let not your heart be troubled!* They, indeed, could not but be troubled, if their Lord's departure made them comfortless (*orphans*) ; but, instead of that, His departure makes them eternal partakers of His life, for it gains for them *the Comforter, the Holy Ghost*, who should turn in and dwell with them, and with Himself, bring in also the Father and the Son, by Him "glorified" to dwell with them for ever. Peace in *faith*, fruit in *love*, perfect satisfaction in *joy*: these are the blessings which the Comforter makes over to the Church of Christ ; while He makes the life of the already glorified Son of Man to be the life of men who are to be glorified. Herein is contained the sum of the whole of the Lord's consolatory discourse to His disciples.

The ancient Church has, with thoughtful care, chosen the Gospels for four Sundays, between Easter and Whit-Sunday, out of these three chapters of St. John, wherein the blessing of Pen-

tecost is extolled as the fruit of Easter. Here let all Easter Christians be filled with Pentecostal longings, and learn to pray from the heart,—Come, Holy Ghost!

The first consolation which the Saviour offers to the saddened and terrified disciples contains within itself all others; for it brings into the heart that *God of all comfort*, on whom faith lays hold (2 Cor. i. 3). “*Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.*” What a heavenly tenderness this is in Jesus, that he should ascribe to His troubled, trembling disciples, *faith in God!* It was through faith in God, the God of Israel, the God of salvation, which led them to Christ, and through which they had continued with Him to the present hour (Luke xxii. 28). In the temptations which were now coming, it was faith in God which should make them be of good cheer: what God in Christ had undertaken to do, viz., the redemption of Israel and of the world,—*that* surely must needs at length reach its goal and completion. See how well Christ knows how to comfort! He says, “Ye believe in God, do ye not? Then, if so, why do ye still tremble? Why are ye alarmed at my departure? In the very fact of your believing in God, *ye believe also in Me*; for the God in whom ye believe, Him ye behold in Me.” In the disciples’ astonished hearts there must have risen up at these words the question: “Thou art God, then? If that be so, then Hallelujah!” Philip, in his subsequent petition: “Shew us the Father” (ver. 8), wanted to arrive at a fuller certainty concerning this light of comfort which was dawning upon him, and the answer of Jesus gives him this certainty. He who believes in God, believes also in Christ, for through Him we believe in God. To be a partaker of God in Christ, this is faith’s happy lot; this is comfort which penetrates the heart and stills its fears. He who seeks God out of Christ will not find Him, or, if he should find Him, he would be terrified, as before “consuming fire.” “Therefore what he means to say is this: Ye have heard that ye ought to trust in God, but I will shew you *how ye may rightly find Him*, that so ye may not, under His name,

worship another God of your own imagining. The meaning is: *Do ye then desire to believe in God? then believe in Me: do ye desire to place your confidence and faith aright, so that it may not fail you, nor prove false? then place it in Me; for in Me dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Therefore, if ye desire certainly to find God, comprehend Him in Me, and through Me; if ye have Me, ye are sure to have Him also.*" (Luther.)

In every hour of trouble, then, especially in the last, may we hear the sweet voice of Jesus whispering in our ear, "Let not your heart be troubled! Ye believe in God, believe also in me: behold, here is your God!" With characters of the cross would God's name be fain written in our hearts, if we are to have comfort in Him.

If the disciples believed with such faith as this, they could not but regard their Lord's departure in a comforting light; they could no longer anxiously ask where was to be henceforth the place of *their abiding*.

Ver. 2, 3. "*In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*"

Let not your heart be troubled! In the place whither our Saviour enters, in *His Father's house, are many mansions*; and if we believe, we dwell where the Son of the house for ever dwells. This power of becoming God's housemates the Saviour here bids His disciples contemplate. *The Father's house* spoken of in this passage is *Heaven*, the real archetype of the Old Testament Temple, where God dwells, and where, full of grace and truth, He shares His dwelling with His people; as especially the epistle to the Hebrews so richly teaches us. (Heb. viii. 2, 5; ix. 12, 24; x. 21; xi. 10; xii. 22, 23.) God's typical house upon earth became *desolate* when Christ went away; but God's real, heavenly house, since the departure of the Son of Man, since the return home of the Son of God, shall be *filled* with many children, whom He leads to glory.

Many mansions—literally, *abiding places* (Heb. xiii. 14)—there are in the Father's house ; not only mansions *for many*, for the multitude of many thousand angels, and for the great company of redeemed sinners—twelve thousand furlongs being the measure of the city—but also there are *many kinds* of mansions, of which, like stars, the brightness of some excels the brightness of others. Compare Matt. xxv. 21, &c., Luke xix. 17, &c., and the different kinds of precious stones in Rev. xxi. 19, &c. “With the Father of Jesus Christ there are many mansions, because there are likewise many members in His body.” (Ireneus.) But just as the many and diversified members form one body without division, so the heavenly mansions, although there are many of them, are yet *one* house. Augustine beautifully says : “Because God is Love, so by means of love it happens that whatever the glorified *individually* possess, is likewise common to *all*. For each one, by loving in his neighbour that which he does not himself possess, possesses it also in his neighbour. Therefore in heaven there will be no jealousy on account of the mansions differing from each other in splendour, because in all the unity of love will reign.” And following Augustine, Mayfart images forth the many mansions in heaven thus : “In the martyrs, the brightness will be like purple, after the colour of the rose, without envy of the virgins ; in the virgins, like snow, after the colour of the lily, without envy of the martyrs. In the teachers, the brightness will be like the shining of the stars, without envy of the other elect ; in the elect, as a green branch, like the palm tree, without envy of the teachers.”

“*Are many mansions.*” They are already there ; they were there in the beginning, for the Son of God filled them with His glory, and from the beginning of the world they have been prepared in the eternal counsel of God for those who, in Christ, shall inherit them.

But the faith of these poor troubled disciples could not reach forth into these heavenly mansions which were awaiting them,

although for the space of three years they had seen the heavens open over their Lord (chap. i. 51). Therefore he continues : “ *If it were not so, I would yet say to you what I do ; for I go to prepare a place for you.*”^{*} If what I have told you concerning the mansions in my Father’s house does not comfort you, you must surely be comforted at this, that I am going to prepare a place for you ! Hold fast by that, and be sure of your abiding by it ; for even if there were no dwelling-places in heaven, I would get ready some for you. My word should create them, even if they did not already exist. “ In short, mansions ye shall certainly have ; even if there were not enough of them at present, I would create enough, so that even if an increase of a hundred for one were too little, I would create a hundred thousand for one, and more even than that ; so that there shall be neither want nor scarcity of all sorts of mansions, whatever your heart may desire. Thus He talks with them in the simplest way imaginable, and as if children, as, indeed, in their thoughts they were (as simple souls must be enticed and drawn), that He may draw them up to where they can get courage and consolation” (Luther). Yes ; when He says, “ *If it were not so, I would yet tell you that your dwelling-place is in my Father’s house,*” He meets *their* child-like thoughts ; but when he says, “ *I go to prepare the place for you,*” He is speaking according to His own thoughts. For if He went not away, the *mansions* would indeed be there, but there would be no place in them *for us sinners*. In no other but in Him alone has the kingdom been prepared from the beginning of the world for the blessed of His Father ; in Him alone has God chosen us

^{*} According to another punctuation (that of our English version), this verse runs : “ In my Father’s house are many mansions ; if it were not so, *I would have told you* ; I go to prepare a place for you.” Certainly this rendering has the merit of being very simple ! But although many both ancient and modern commentators have accepted it, yet I have never been able to satisfy myself with this, “ *I would have told you,*” for the sense seems so tame that, throughout the gospel, no passage resembling it is to be found ; indeed, it is a clause utterly pointless.

to glory ; and the Son's departure was from the beginning marked down in the plan of the heavenly city. After having perfected His work of redemption, the Saviour enters into the heavenly sanctuary, as the Forerunner of His people, as the first fruits of the opened Paradise, leading by the hand the pardoned thief ; there He prepares for them the place, inasmuch as He opens to them an entrance into His Father's house by virtue of His blood, and there Himself becomes to them the new and living Way by which they enter into the life and blessedness of heaven. "The many *mansions* in heaven are all there (a father of the Church says), but Christ goes to open for us the *path* to those mansions which through sin we have lost, that we might again rise to fellowship with angels."

But *how* can we follow the Forerunner ? "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven," He says in chap. iii. 13 ; how may we mount up to the place prepared for us ? Answer : "*Although I go away to prepare a place for you, yet I will not leave you alone, for without me ye cannot follow me, but I will come to fetch you ; I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.*" Of what *coming again* does the Lord here speak ? The same of which He spoke in Matt. xxiv. 30, 31,—his glorious return at the last day to "gather together His elect" (Acts i. 11). Visibly He departs, visibly will He return ; and there He will receive His people to Himself into His heavenly kingdom. But both His coming and the receiving to Himself of His people can even now be traced in the whole course of His kingdom upon earth. He *has* come again as the risen Prince of Life ? He *has* come again in the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, and has made His Church sharer in His peace and life. That which will be openly revealed at the last day, we have already in the hidden life of faith ; as indeed St. Paul says, we are "made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Never will He leave us orphans ; it would be for His love too long if we had to wait until the last day, or until our death,

before we should be with Him ! No ; before He fetches home to the place prepared for them in heaven, on the one hand, the souls of His redeemed at the moment of their death, and, on the other, their bodies on the great day of His return, He receives them to Himself, both body and soul, in holy baptism, and keeps them with Him in faith by nourishing them through His word and through His body and blood. We have often said in these pages, and we are never weary of repeating it, that only they *shall see* eternal life who *have it in faith*. And so also, only those *shall be revealed* as partners with Christ in glory, who, as partners in His hidden life, *are* seated in heavenly places in the midst of this earthly world.

Let not your heart be troubled ! If Christians daily find refuge in their Father's house in heaven, and are able with joy to say : "Here is my heaven, even here on earth," what is there that would seek to frighten them ! When Luther was threatened with excommunication at Worms, and the Cardinal Cajetan cried out to him : "In the whole Roman empire there will no place be allowed for thee ; where wilt thou dwell ?" he quietly answered, "In heaven." Some Lutheran preachers who, on account of the gospel, were driven out of South Germany, had taken refuge with the elector John Frederick ; on their complaining with tears that the emperor had banished them from the whole of his empire, the elector asked : "And has he then banished you from heaven as well ?" Heinrich von Zutphen, one of the first Lutheran martyrs, when the Roman authorities commanded him under heavy threats to be silent, answered by saying that "Heaven was as near to him in *Ditmarsch* as elsewhere ; and that he must needs once shed his blood for the gospel's cause." This is what it is to have felt the consolation contained in this text !

The Lord now pauses for a moment, as if waiting for His consoling words to sink into the innermost heart of His disciples ; then he adds :

Ver. 4. "*And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*"

(Or, according to a shorter rendering, "*And whither I go, ye know the way.*")

When John recorded these words, we cannot doubt but that with joyful heart he looked up to his Lord, and confessed, "Yea, Lord, we do now know!" *Then*, indeed, when the Lord's kindness ascribed this knowledge of *His* and *their* way to His disciples, they could not but with shame confess that they were not yet, what they should be, intimately familiar with the Father's house *whither*, and with the blessed way *whereby* the Saviour was preceding them—going before in order to return and fetch them. Would that every reader of this verse at the present day might feel a salutary shame at the entire knowledge of the way of salvation which is ascribed to *him*! "From the Lord's manner of dealing with their troubled hearts, much might be learnt as to how we ought to receive the office of the New Testament; that we should exercise it as an office of the Spirit, in which we not only require faith, but also *ascribe* faith—give the Spirit, who gives to us more than might have been imagined. Oh, to make each other doubt, to occasion anxious scruples, is far easier, and has often the appearance of a greater earnestness, or of caution against deception; but unperceived, it becomes, like all law, the power of sin. To be able to strengthen one another thus: 'Thou knowest the way; thou art in the way!' is a greater service when it is done in the Spirit. But in order to effect this aright, it is necessary that, by Him with whom we are dealing, the thoughts of the heart should be honestly expressed, as is here done by the disciples, in order that we may be able to remove from his heart that ignorance, doubt, and fear, which is still lurking within him." (Rieger).

Ver. 5. "*Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?*"

It is almost as if Thomas were complaining of the Lord's loving supposition respecting them. "Alas! dear Lord," he would say, "how can'st thou speak so highly of thy poor dis-

ciples? No, alas! we know *not* whither thou goest; how then can we know *the way*?" (chap. xi. 6). The poor dejected disciple sees no other issue before his eyes but death. What he has heard concerning the many mansions provided for many in the Father's house, and of Jesus' departure there to prepare the place for his followers, has indeed made him *wish*, but has not brought him to *know*; for with him *knowing* meant to have *seen*, and *handled with his hands*. But to see it would have been to him unspeakable joy. Not the cold, painless doubt of a God-emptied mind, indifferent to the heavenly inheritance, (as Pilate's was,) but the tormenting doubt of a mind which *cannot* succeed in making its way, amid the gainsaying of earthly reason, into the heavenly blessing, by the power and virtue of love;—this was Thomas's doubt. Such souls as these the Saviour treats with all tenderness. He esteems the dull disciple worthy of those sweet words which have ever since blossomed in the hearts of all Christians, both of the unlearned and the wise, as an unfading rose of Heaven's own growth.

Ver. 6. "*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*"

I am the way! Thomas had asked, "How *can* we know the way?" Jesus answers, How is it possible that you, my disciples, can *not* know the way? *I am the way!* First behold me, and recognise me as the *way*, and then the *goal* will not be hidden from thee to which I am *going*, and to which I shall fetch you—viz., into my Father's house. Into His eternal home the Lord Jesus was going, when, through the suffering of death, He should be crowned with glory and honour; and being exalted to be the Captain of our salvation, He was there to prepare for us a place in His Father's house: that is his way *for us*. Yet we could never rejoice in this His way, if He merely stood in the way as a sign-post, or if He merely went before us as a *Guide*. God be praised, our Jesus is not only *Counsellor*, but *Mighty* as well; and not mighty only, but *Mighty God!* (Isa. ix. 6). If He is as a sign-post, He is one

with living arms ; for He *receives us to Himself*, from His cross He draws us up to Himself, He lifts us upon His shoulders ; in short, He is Himself the way, the new living way, which, like a full flowing river, bears along our little bark, and brings it to the ocean of a blissful eternity.

Conrad Rieger sets before us Jesus as the way, thus : "Where is the man who will give himself to another to be his way ? If the king could not cross over a dyke, and were to say to one of you, 'Lay thyself in this dyke to make a bridge that I may cross over upon thee,' where is the meanest subject in the land who would consent to do it ? But what no man would like to do for another, *that* Jesus does for us all."

Into this safe heavenward way, which He Himself is, His love would fain most urgently draw us, that we may tread it with perfect assurance of finding it the key of heaven ; and therefore He not only says, "*I am the way*," but he also holds out to our view the heavenly treasure, to the participation of which He as the way brings us, by adding, "*and the truth, and the life*." The future salvation to which He is the way, is in Him now already present ; and it is, indeed, just because He is the truth and the life, that He is also the way. He who in faith takes Christ for the way, will *soon* find by experience that he is treading the "way of holiness," (Isa. xxxv. 8) ; for, walking in this way, He walks in the midst of *truth* and *life*. Enlightened to know Christ, in whom dwells *the truth* full of grace, those who are conversant with this path, get delivered from the bondage of the murderer and liar ; and thus *the life*, which is the heavenly end of the way, imparts to them happiness even on the road, and makes them conquerors of death. *The way, the truth, and the life* : these are the three steps in the one heavenly ladder, which is Christ. He who steps upon the first has the second shining towards him, and he who stands upon the second sees the third presenting itself to his view. Only let us not miss the first ! For he who has the

first, will certainly have the other two given him, so as to have the full abundance of blessing.

Luther is inexhaustible in extolling this consoling utterance. "This saying," he says, "may be summed up most simply in these words: Through faith take hold on Christ, then will thou begin aright. Hold on to him and thou goest on aright. Continue thus to the end, and thou art saved. So that with these words He would tear our heart away from every other ground of confidence, and fasten it alone on Himself; nothing else should we know or think of in relation to the great plunge into eternal life. For if any one should question us concerning this great matter, how we are to pass out of this life, through sin and death, into eternal righteousness and life, from the devil to God, out of hell to heaven, then we may bring forward this text which teaches us that there is no other way, no other true, safe, certain road, no other safe bridge or path, no other port or ferry, but Christ alone. Therefore, look to it that ye know where first to plant your foot, and that ye are treading the only path *that can bear you*; in other words, that ye hang on fast to me, and do not tremble nor be dismayed like those who know me not. For a Christian ought to feel sure of his case; and having Christ, he has all, so that he has ever good reason to rejoice and be glad."

Christ is the way, and there is no other way to heaven except through Him; He is the truth and the life, and everlasting, heavenly joy is not to be found except in Him: "*No man cometh unto the Father but by me.*" *No one*, neither angel nor sinner (Col. i. 16; 1 Tim. ii. 5), but, on the other hand, *every one* who comes through Him, comes indeed truly to the Father, in time and in eternity, here in faith, there in sight; *i.e.*, he is passed from death unto life, from sin and damnation into guiltlessness and justification, from sorrow and anguish into everlasting joy and blessedness.

As the Lord was speaking, must there not have awoke in the disciples' hearts holy recollections, which for the moment had

been lost in their sorrow, of those precious words of His, words of eternal life, which a year before had drawn from Peter the cry, "*Lord, to whom should we go?*" For is not the sum and substance of all that from the very first they had heard Him preach contained in this word, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*" Ay indeed! Therefore the Lord adds:—

Ver. 7. "*If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*"

If I were indeed to you what I have testified myself to be, ye would before now have come through me to the Father, and would know by your own experience that I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. But yet—let not your heart be troubled—"from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him."

Observe how differently the Saviour knows how to speak to souls who are truly turned towards the light, and to those who love darkness rather than light! Yonder, the proud, self-righteous Jews lie under the sentence, "Ye neither know me nor my Father; but here, the poor, unlettered disciples are lifted up from their state of troubled ignorance into that of blissful knowledge; for the Lord's keen eye of love discovers in them a faith which, though a faint glimmering spark, would shortly, when blown upon by the Holy Ghost, burst forth into a bright flame. Not in vain had the disciples heard from Jesus' lips the words of eternal life; not in vain had they witnessed His walk, so full of grace and truth; they had gone steadily on in the light of God's revelation, and *from henceforth*, now that the hour for the glorification of the Son of Man was come, they were to recognise in Him the Father, they were to see in Him the Father; *from henceforth*, after the "lifting up" on Golgotha, in the light which from the cross streamed backwards and forwards upon Jesus' life, they learnt to express their experience as His disciples in the words, "We saw His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." Thomas was silent. But the disciple who, a few days before, had told Jesus of the Greeks who were

waiting for salvation, could not be silent, Philip must express the thought which arose in his mind at the Lord's words, "Ye have seen Him."

Ver. 8. "*Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*"

In this request there is a marvellous mixture of nature and of grace, of an earthly and of a heavenly mind. Philip means to take the Lord at His word; "Yea, Lord, Thou art the way, and through Thee only do we come to the Father: *shew us then the Father, and it sufficeth us.*" This is his longing desire, the aim and goal of his life, face to face to behold the Father.

God to behold—this, this is bliss,
The fairest flower of Paradise.

(Compare Rev. xxii. 4). What a Moses and a David once longed for—to see God's face—is here, too, desired by Philip, with an eager heart desired. If He might have one look into the Father's glory, he would then be satisfied; then he would be sure of his salvation.

He knew, indeed, and believed that the Jesus whom he saw was one with the Father; but the lowly form of that Son of Man who was now about to die, lay like a mountain before his faith: and to see the Father in the face of this Jesus of Nazareth—this was what he could not do. He therefore wishes to see the Father in the brightness of His glory, and if the Saviour had appeared to him, glorified, as He had done to the three disciples on the holy mount, then he would have been quite satisfied, and would have devoutly exclaimed (as Thomas did afterwards), "My Lord and my God!" He believed in God, and it was the comfort of his heart that, in believing in Jesus, he was placing his faith in no other than God; but what he wanted was, that Jesus should *shew* him the Father, so as that he might see in one that which appeared to him to be divided, the glory of God in the flesh of the Son of Man. "The desire is deeply seated in us all," says Rieger, "to recover the God whom we have lost, as it were by one single bound;

to have ourselves helped out of all doubt and attacks of unbelief by a sudden and decisive manifestation of light. Oh, if we would know how we stand with God, what His mind is towards us, how we may come to him—let us only hold fast by Christ's word, by all that is made known to us of his testimony whilst in the world: it is a perfect counterpart of the mind and heart of God."

The Saviour recalls His disciple's eyes, which had turned away from His flesh and were roving amongst the clouds, and draws them back again upon Himself, as He was there living and breathing before them.

Ver 9. "*Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*"

Have I been so long time with you? This reminds the disciple of that day when Jesus found him, and said unto him, "Follow me!" and when Philip brought Nathanael to "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." What? During all this time had he not got to know whose son Jesus Christ is? Had he not found the Father in His Son? Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou—*thou, Philip*, one of the first of my disciples—*not known me?* If any one says to Jesus, "Shew us the *Father*," this is His reply—"Hast thou not known me?" Oh how much more bitterly than over the blindness of a Philip must He now bewail the blindness of Christians, who think they are awarding Him the highest honour when they bestow upon Him the name of a "divine Teacher," meaning thereby a Teacher according to the dictates of reason. May this lament of His unacknowledged love, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou, my people, not known me?" sound in the ear of all baptised Christians who love not Christ because they find not God in Christ.

His word—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," the Lord repeats from that discourse to His disciples in which He

took them to witness that He had discharged His mission to the people faithfully (ch. xii. 45). Let him who has seen *Christ* be content, for he *has* seen the Father. St. John knew the truth of his Master's word from his own blessed experience. In the fourth chapter of his first epistle, after repeating, in verse 12, what he had said in chapter i. 18 of his gospel, "No man hath seen God at any time," he then, in verse 14, adds, "*We have seen* and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

Not like Moses and Elijah does Christ shew the true God ; when He shews the Father He points not to one who is something different from Himself ; rather He is Himself the Visible of the Father, as the Father is the Invisible of the Son.* "He who beholds a creature does not see in him the nature also of God. If Christ's nature were different from that of the Father, He could not have said, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' No one, who is ignorant of gold can see in silver the nature of gold." (Chrysostom.)

Let us, then, set Christ before our eyes, when our soul is seeking God's face ; after Christ let us grasp, to Him let us cling, when in prayer we seek the personal divinity whom we call *Thou*. "I can in no other way realise the idea of God," says Luther, "than when there rises up in my mind the form of a man hanging on the cross." In this respect the blessed apostles have somewhat the advantage of us (St. Peter mentions this with a certain feeling of shame, 1 Pet. i. 8) ; nevertheless, what he has seen with his eyes, St. John imparts to his brethren, that their joy may be full, while again the Lord Himself pronounces a blessing upon those who, without having *seen* as Thomas did, yet *believe* like Thomas (ch. xx. 29). Let only the word, the blessed word, draw the picture of Christ upon our hearts, and we are content ; for there we see God aright as our dear Father, which is as He would have us see Him ; and when the time comes that we shall "receive the end of our faith," then, with

* Filius visibile Patris, Pater invisibile Filii. (*Irenæus*.)

the glorious joy of sight we shall recognise Him in that same Jesus whom to faith He has set forth as the mercy-seat (Rom. iii. 25) on which He dwells.

The Lord's discourse presently turns to the sight of *faith*, which sees in the *word*.

Ver. 10, 11. *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*

Philip prays, "Shew us the Father." Christ answers, "*Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?*" It is then to *faith* that the Father is shown. Not only is the Father in Him, but He also is in the Father: from everlasting the Father calls the Son the love of His love, and from everlasting the Son calls the Father the life of His life (ch. xvii. 24. ch. v. 26). Never had the Lord spoken out more freely concerning His eternal Godhead than He does here. He refers the disciples to His discourse in chap. x. (see especially verses 30 and 38), and then, with a sorrowful emphasis, He says, "*Believest thou not?*" John, who drank in the word of life lying on Jesus' breast—he in his secret heart may have, we may suppose, even now (if the others did not, ch. xvi. 31), have breathed forth the reply, "Yes, Lord, I believe." And what answer, O my soul, dost *thou* make? The holy Bernhard answers, "I have seen the Father in Thee, Jesus my Lord. For in thee my faith has a Christ, begotten *of* the Father, lying *in* the Father's bosom, enthroned *with* the Father, come *from* the Father, zealous *for* the Father, bowed *under* the Father, and—oh love!—once hanging on the cross *apart from* (forsaken by) the Father?"

In like manner, Christ reminds the disciples of His *words* and *works*, wherein the Father's glory is revealed as dwelling in Him, with a repetition of what He had formerly said, which might well put them to the blush. (Ch. v. 36; vii. 16, 17; x. 38; xii. 49) "See how He here joins together the two things, His

word and His work, and attributes them both to His Father ;—thus Himself explaining what He means where He says :—He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father ; viz., that it is nothing else but to study His words and works. The Jews saw Him with their bodily eye, just as a cow would see, and were made none the better for it. But to *see and know as Christians* is to see and note what His lips speak and what His hands do.” (Luther.) In saying, “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father which dwelleth in me, *He*”—He is thinking of Philip’s request, “Shew us,” and condescending to the weakness of His disciple, He completes the sentence with a reference to His *works* as what *did show* what Philip required, and so, instead of adding, “He speaketh the *words*,” He says, He doeth the *works*.” We are clearly confirmed in this view of the Lord’s words by the following verse, where—as in ch. x. 38—He kindly places “underneath” these weak children of faith, “the everlasting arms” of His Father’s power. And this He still does. Hast thou not observed it ? When a man’s eyes are opened to all the marvellous works of love by which from time to time the Father has drawn him to the Son, he exclaims with Peter, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord !” But nevertheless, with Peter, when a John says to him, “It is the Lord !” he also hastens to throw himself at His feet.

In the 9th, 10th, and 11th verses, the Lord has been replying to Philip’s : “Shew us the Father ;” and now He turns to the “*It sufficeth us*,” which His love had not failed to hear.

Ver. 12-14. “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do ; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*”

Let not your heart be troubled, but believe ! Ye shall be satisfied indeed, and nothing shall be wanting to you, if only ye believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ; for

from henceforth ye shall know that ye also are in me and I in you, I the head and ye the members; and the works that I do shall ye *do with me*, yea, and I will do *in* you and *through* you greater works than these which I did *before* you, to show forth my glory, and through which ye believed in me.

The Lord before had said, "Believe *me* for the works' sake." But now He says, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also." Thus the works draw us on to receive the testimony of the words, but when any one embraces the truth and life of those works and words, and believes on Christ, Christ takes up His dwelling in him, and does from that time in the believer, the same works which the Father does in Him. We have seen that all the works which the Son of God does in the Father's name, have their complete accomplishment in *quickenings* and in *judging*. The Father is honoured in the Son through the work of *quickenings* in the case of believers, and through the work of *judgment* in the case of unbelievers. Both these works (this is the promise of our text) shall go on to be wrought in Christ's Church. As the red of the morning dawn is mirrored in the dew, so Christ would fain mirror His holy image in the work of those who believe in Him. They shall do the truth, even as He is truth, (1 John iv. 17). His works of power will He go on to do through them, confirming their word with signs and wonders; and His works of *salvation* shall they perform, for through them will He be God's salvation unto the ends of the earth, (Acts xiii. 47). Not only shall Christ's mighty, saving work go on, but it shall increase and shall continue to be wrought with power such as has never yet been seen; greater works than those which Christ has hitherto done, shall they who believe on Him do. How could it be otherwise? Is not the tree greater than the mustard-seed from which it grows? Is not the ear of wheat greater than the single grain which falls into the ground? and the reaper's harvest than the labourer's sowing? "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto me," the Lord says. All the

works of His quickening power, both spiritual and bodily, which Christ had hitherto done for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil, were but first-fruits and pledges of future works; it was not until after His glorification that the windows of heaven were to be fully opened, when the streams of living water should be poured forth upon the thirsty world, and from thenceforth should perpetually flow forth from the Spirit-filled body of believers (chap. vii. 39). Yes, we can understand the Lord as He looks round upon the eleven—this alarmed, sorrowing little company—and says: “Ye shall do greater works than these.” When Peter delivered his discourse on the day of Pentecost, and caught at a single draught 3000 men; when Paul declared to the Church at Jerusalem one thing after another that God had done among the heathen, through his ministration, and in return James gave answer: “Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe,” (Acts xxi. 19, 20); when Philip filled all Samaria with the gospel, (Acts viii.); when John, as pastor, (1 John ii. 18,) tended churches in which the darkness was passing away, and the true Light was now shining, and to whom he was able to exclaim, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith;” then was in a measure fulfilled the word, “Greater works than these shall he do.” Ay, and boldly we may add: it is being fulfilled in the case of every believer, whose consecrated life honours the Father in the Son; for in like manner as the Father is greater than the Son, so also must the works which the Son performs in His disciples, now that He is glorified with the Father’s glory, be greater than those which He had to perform in His state of humiliation. And this nowhere is more clearly exhibited than in the dying hours of believers, when St. Paul’s words, “We are *not* forsaken” (2 Cor. iv. 9) is put into their mouth as the reward and fruit of that cry of anguish put forth by the Saviour, when He exclaimed, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

But Christ’s works of *judgment*, also, which He performs

through His disciples, have been greater since the world has seen Him exalted at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven, (Matt. xxvi. 64, chap. xii. 48). The *word* by which unbelievers are judged has gone forth into all the world, and binds upon earth that which shall be bound in heaven also (Matt. xvi. 19). Not merely works of judgment such as that which Peter wrought upon Ananias and his wife, but more especially the works of the just Judge, which in the history of nations follow upon the rejection of the gospel, and the contempt of its messengers, as He Himself showed them to John in the Revelation, and they bear witness that the Apostle's word, "The saints shall judge the world," (1 Cor. vi. 7,) is even now in the course of a mighty fulfilment. Luther is never weary of testifying to the power of Christians; he says, in his Commentary on Gen. xxx. : "It does not seem very evident to men that God has so great a care for us, and that he so unceasingly concerns Himself about us. The Church is the rightful queen of the whole world, but we see in her anything but that; for the world rules and reigns over all; but if the Church, by her prayers and doctrine, did not uphold the world, all would in a moment perish and go to ruin. But this is what the world can neither see nor believe; ay, the Turk and the Frenchman imagine that they it is who rule the world and uphold it, and this delusion will continue until the time come that they perish, and their designs and counsels come to an end; then, though not till then, will they know and feel that they are nothing, but then it will be too late." And also on Genesis xxxix. he says: "Therefore, it is to be remembered that it is for His Church's sake that God blesses the ungodly. For the world would before long entirely disappear if it were without the Church, and the gospel were not taught and learnt. Thus in our time also, we have God with us, for we have the word and the holy sacrament. Through us He speaks and works, and thus redeems many souls from death and eternal damnation. We are the helpers and saviours of the world, and every good thing that

Germany possesses is not to be ascribed to her great power, to her virtue, or to her piety ; nor yet to her wisdom, but to the scorned, rejected, and execrated men who are called Christians ; it is they who are to be thanked for it." And on our text he says, interpreting Christ's mind : " Therefore it will be seen that ye do much greater works than I now do. For I have not yet fully entered upon my government, nor taken possession of my kingdom even over my Jews, but allow myself to be upset and put to death by them. But after that, I shall so bestir myself among them, that ye shall deal with them as with a parcel of old cards ; but this will not be by the sword or by physical force, but by the *word* and *prayer*, through which I will be mighty in you, and so press them home, that they shall be forced either to receive your gospel or to go to ruin. *So that what exists shall continue to do so through you ; and on the other hand, what ye no longer hold up shall fall to the ground*, so that they cannot do as they will, but in spite of themselves, must live by your power."

The *ground* of the promise here given to believers, lies in Christ's departure ; for He adds, "*Because I go unto my Father.*" "*That* is the thing which will do it ; from thence will ye have power to do these works, because ye are my members, because ye believe in me, so that ye shall be in me, and I in you. I am now weak, because I am still here below, walking on the earth in this flesh, and do as yet but few works, and those small, as when I raised two or three from the dead, or healed a handful of Jews ; and I must now have myself crucified and killed. But afterwards, when I have been crucified, dead, and buried, I shall first spring from death into life, from the cross and grave into eternal glory, divine majesty and power, and then shall I *draw all men unto me*, and every creature shall needs be subject unto me." (Luther.) Greater are the works which Christ does as the exalted Head of His Church, which is His body, than those which He did in the body of His humiliation. Greater are the works of the Holy Ghost, as proceeding from the throne

of the glorified Son of Man, than those of the Holy Ghost, as descending upon Him, when baptized in Jordan (chap. vii. 39).

It is Christ Himself who does the works in His disciples, for they are works *obtained by prayer* through faith in His name: "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*"

"Who, then, is this *I*? I should have thought He should have said, 'That will He the Father do?' But as it is, He takes it upon himself. By these words He gives us clearly to understand that He Himself is true, almighty God together with the Father," (Luther). Prayer *in the name of Jesus* (in verse 14, the Lord repeats, "In my name," because on this name entirely depends the hearing of prayer) we shall have to consider more closely in the 23d and 24th verses of the 16th chapter. Only let us observe here how the discourse returns back to the theme: "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." No prayer really enters into God's ear and heart, except that which is offered in the name of Jesus, because it is the Father's eternal desire to be glorified in the Son; but whoever prays in this name will be satisfied, for to him God's father's heart stands open, and together with the only-begotten Son, he has a child's place in the Father's bosom.

The Comforter.

CHAPTER XIV. 15-31.

Come, Holy Ghost, and fill the hearts of Thy believers, kindling in them the fire of thine own divine love. Amen.

“*Let not your heart be troubled!*” Such were the consoling words which were spoken to the heart of His disciples by the Son now about to return home to His Father; and in the portion which we have been last considering, *faith* on the Son in the Father, and on the Father in the Son, is commended as the heavenly antidote against all fear, and as the divine power which enables men to lay hold on the glorified life of Jesus Christ, and its various offices towards us. “*Lord, increase our faith!*” Such was the humble prayer which the Lord had awakened in the hearts of His disciples, and He now proceeds to quiet its aspirations by the promise of *the Comforter, the Holy Ghost*, which should come and abide with them and help them, in order to lead them into *peace in believing*, and to prepare their hearts to be living habitations of the triune God.

Ver. 15. “*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*” With these words the Lord meets the desire of His disciples to be able to believe on Him, and so to believe on Him that their troubled hearts might be calmed and comforted. After this they really longed, for they *loved* their Lord; their anxious souls yearned towards His Saviour’s heart, to which they had been drawn by the sweet words of comfort which He had been speaking, just as sorrowing children are drawn by the voice of their beloved

mother. Already in faith they were refreshed by *His* love ; and in turn they were refreshing His heart too by the love through which they were giving themselves wholly to Him. The true course for their love to Him, the Saviour now points out by saying, "*Keep my commandments.*" Thus, not according to *their* thoughts, but *His*, will He be loved by them ; their love must attach itself to His *commandments*, the sum total of which is contained in fellowship with His life, as His life is revealed in His word. "In the most gracious manner the Lord fastens upon their love to Him, and thereby leads it on to the keeping of His commandments. And in this track the apostles afterwards faithfully followed in their exhortations." (Rieger.) To keep His *commandments*, to abide in His *word*, to keep His *word*, all describe the same thing which in the next chapter is expressed by, "If ye abide *in me*, and *my words* abide in you." Compare also 1 John ii. 3, 5, 6 ; iii. 24. The commands of Jesus Christ require that which he that commands likewise imparts—viz., a divine life ; so that they are no cause of terror to the poor sinner, like Moses' commandments, which place us in the position of insolvent debtors. "Give that which thou dost demand, and demand what thou wilt"—thus in Augustine does love pray ; while in St. John's words she confesses : "His commandments are not grievous."

Would we also fain love Christ so heartily that His life shall be the source and treasure of our life, the keeping of His commandments our food and happiness ? If so, He comforts us, because we feel our insufficiency, and promises to help our weakness, when he says :—

Ver. 16. "*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.*"

Prayer in the Saviour's name likewise belongs to keeping His commandments (ver. 14) ; but the sum total of all that we are to pray for is *the gift of the Holy Ghost* ; as the Lord had said before to His disciples in Luke xi. 13. But before *they* could learn to pray with full joyful confidence for the Holy Ghost, it

was necessary that *Christ* should, by His departure, obtain this Comforter for them; by His mediation and prayers acquire it for them from the Father; for He says: "*I will pray the Father*," upon my request shall your prayer be founded, and by it be seconded. The Lord calls the Holy Ghost a *Comforter*; and, indeed *another* Comforter, thus pointing Him out as One with Himself in His work of Comforter, though a separate Person from himself. "Every one," says Luther, "understands what is meant by this word *comfort* and *Comforter*; it is not a thing for any one to shrink from, or be afraid of, but *that* is the thing which a sad and troubled heart yearns for above all things. We must, therefore, learn thus to know and believe in the Holy Ghost as he is imaged forth and described to us by Christ—viz., that He is a Spirit of grace and comfort, whereby the whole Godhead is exhibited to us as nothing but consolation. It is the Father's will to comfort, for He gives the Holy Ghost; the Son comforts, for He prays for it, and the Holy Ghost is to be Himself the Comforter." But the name Advocate (representative of one's cause) the most faithfully renders this word *Paraclete*. In fact, the Lord promises His disciples an Advocate who shall conduct the cause of their salvation before God and in opposition to the world *WITHIN them* (representing them. Rom. viii. 26; Luke xii. 12); whilst He Himself, the Lord Jesus, as their Representative, shall conduct their cause *FOR them*, on which account St. John applies to Christ also this name—*Paraclete, Advocate* with the Father (1 John ii. 1). We may say that Christ speaks *for* us; the Holy Ghost speaks *to* us. It is His business and office to speak the truth home to our hearts. That which the Son of God, the eternal and incarnate God, has obtained for us sinners—eternal life, *that* the Holy Ghost applies to us by making itself the bond of uniting love between God and man, and by making men partakers of the divine nature (1 Pet. i. 4), just as from eternity it, as the Spirit of Love, has been the personal living bond of essential unity between the loving Father and the beloved Son (chap. xv.

26 ; Rom. v. 5 ; Gal. iv. 6). For us the Saviour went to the Father, for not in order to abide with us for ever in His suffering flesh was He born of the Virgin Mary, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," but in order for us to die and to be glorified, for us to enter into His glory as our Mediator, and the Captain of our salvation.

But the Lord Jesus Christ departed not without bequeathing to us *another Comforter*, who was to *abide with us for ever*, and who should enter upon the same labour of love which, so long as He was with them in the world, the Saviour Himself discharged for them. He had been the Master of the house, they were the household ; henceforth *the other Comforter* of the Pentecost family should break the bread at the table of Christ's kingdom. Richly did the first Church experience what the Lord here promised them ; they "were edified, and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." This *other Comforter* neither is another thing, nor brings another thing, than the Comforter Christ ; for the same life which the Father "has given to the Son to have in Himself," is likewise by the Father and the Son given to the Holy Ghost to have in Himself ; and what He receives from the Father and the Son He imparts to us. *One God* it is who *plans*, who *works out*, and who *applies* to us our salvation ; *one God over us*, *for us*, and *in us* ; *one God*, our *Creator*, our *Redeemer*, and our *Comforter*. It is, however, the office of God the Holy Ghost to bring about this *eternal abiding and dwelling* within us of the Father and the Son ; to glorify Christ *in us* now that Christ has been glorified *for us* with the Father, and to glorify *us* into the image of the glory of Christ.

Thus we see that the cause of lost sinners who shall be saved is in good, even in almighty hands, even in the hand of the Triune Love ! Of what, then, shall we be afraid ? "For in very truth, my Lord Jesus Christ is not my enemy, neither is the Father, nor yet the Holy Ghost ; for they all three work together to the end that I shall have that *comfort* which the Father sends,

the Son prays for, the Holy Ghost Himself brings." (Luther.) It is God the Father's will that we shall have eternal life ; God the Son is given to us, and gives Himself to obtain for us life ; God the Holy Ghost takes up His abode with us, as our Advocate, to transfer us into the life thus obtained, and through faith to preserve us in it for ever.

Blessed are the clients of the Holy Ghost, the heavenly Advocate ! they are possessed of treasures borne in earthen vessels ! If we know Him, our soul's faithful, tender Counsellor and Friend, and day by day and hour by hour enjoy the solace of intercourse with Him ; then we understand aright the love which led Jesus to say to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled !" But thou wilt never know the Comforter except by learning His language *in the Word*, and receiving it *from the Word* into thy heart, just as the Lord again and again refers to His *word* His disciples, who were to receive the Holy Ghost. It is this very word which the Comforter makes to be in us strength and life, so that we know it to be the word of truth :—

" His Spirit whispers unto mine
Consoling, tender words divine."

It is to this that the name points which the Saviour in the next verse applies to the Comforter.

Ver. 17. "*Even the Spirit of Truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him : but ye know Him ; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*"

As Truth itself had the Son of God conversed with His disciples, and what He had spoken was truth (chap. viii. 45). Henceforth the *Spirit of Truth* was to be their abiding Instructor and Advocate, the Spirit who, as living God with the Father and the Son, *is* essentially Truth, and, by means of His abode within the hearts of believers, *imparts* Truth. The Comforter's guarding and saving power with which He dwells within us, *is* *Truth* ; and that which in chapter viii. 43, we recognised as the

sum of the *word* of Truth, is the same of which the *Spirit* of Truth witnesses to our spirit,—viz., of our *sin* and of God's *grace* in Christ. The two together include all truth into which the Spirit leads those who receive Him. "This Spirit of Truth possesses entire truth from His searchings into the deep things of the Godhead ; He knows what is in God and thus He also reveals the truth ; He guides into all truth ; He gives the power to declare the truth ; He keeps us walking in the truth ; He establishes the heart so that we get to stand in true grace ; He brings it to pass that knowledge, faith, hope, love, each gets to be of that fashion, of which, according to the truth, it should be." (Rieger.)

If *the world* could not understand the language of truth, because they could not bear to hear the word of truth, it is impossible that the world should *receive the Spirit of Truth*, "*for it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.*" The world, which loves the things of the world, and will be the world still, will maintain itself as the world against all the solicitations of that kingdom of heaven "*which suffereth violence,*"—this world has no spiritual eye to discern the Spirit of Truth ; He is inaccessible to *it* ; the good things which He brings it has no mind to look at ; it is already satisfied, and has need of nothing. "The love of the world sees not what is invisible." (Augustine.) But even if they *saw* the Spirit of Truth, saw Him in the same way that the Jews saw Jesus,—even if they were forced to become aware of His presence, through the witness which Christians, full of the Holy Ghost, bear to it, loudly proclaiming it in the world's unwilling ear (chap. xv. 27 ; Acts v. 32), yet it *knows* Him not, any more than the Jews knew the Son of God ; for it will not comply with that by which alone they might be able to know Jesus. The voice of truth finds no echo and touches no chord in worldly hearts who love lies, and awakes in them no *prayer* upon which any *receiving* might follow.

Even this accusation pronounced upon the world, contains for the disciples and for all who, like them, obey the Holy Ghost,

the comforting assurance, "Let not your heart be troubled!"—a solace against distress in the unspiritual world. As Luther puts it: "With these words He would fain have His disciples comforted, as if He had said, Instead of taking it to heart, be only cheery and undismayed when ye are, as it were, quite solitary and alone. For I tell you there is a kind of folk which can neither see nor hear the Spirit of Truth, though one were to preach oneself to death, were to sound it into their eyes and ears, and paint it in the clearest way possible before their very noses; yet all is of no use, they cannot receive the Spirit, but will stand by their spirit of lies. Do you, therefore, keep with the little lot who like to hear and receive my word, and be unscared even though the other lot will not join you, and know this, that whatever you do in my name must be right before God and all the angels, and that the world at length will, in spite of itself, be forced to acknowledge and praise it."

Over against this picture of the world, which cannot receive the Spirit of Truth, the Lord in the most affectionate manner places His disciples, who can receive Him: "*But ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you.*" They know Him then even now! How could they help knowing the Spirit of Truth as well, the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, when *from henceforth* they knew the Father in the Son? (ver. 7). Verily, if they had had at this time to describe the Comforter and the comfort which He brings, they would either have made Thomas' excuse, or have preferred Philip's request; but the Lord beheld that in them which separated them from the world as His disciples; He saw the little corner in their hearts in which dwelt love to Him; He saw their capability of receiving the truth. Because with love they clung to Jesus, therefore the Spirit of Truth also was no stranger Spirit, but a beloved One, even before they had experienced His personal manifestation; and when they came to experience it, when on the day of Pentecost, the Comforter did appear to dwell *with* the Church as in the chosen place of His habitation, and to be *in* them that

believed, then He found the door already opened wide to receive Him. They immediately recognised Him with joy to be the promised and longed for Spirit of Truth who was to glorify their dear Lord within them, for nothing of Himself did He speak, but solely that which He had heard from the Father and the Son. Let a man only *desire* to receive the Spirit of Truth, and he already knows Him; the desire for eternal comfort, which could have been wrought in his heart by none other than the Comforter, is in itself a sure and certain earnest of His gracious indwelling.

Even up to the present day has Christ's promise been fulfilled of the Comforter's abiding with the Church for ever—an abiding which the world, let it try ever so hard, can never prevent. The twofold promise: "The Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, shall abide with you for ever," and, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," is a guarantee to the Church for her eternal duration; and every one who is her member in spirit and in truth, having, through the Spirit, become a partaker of the truth which once Peter confessed, shall for ever abide with the everlasting Church, and against him the gates of hell shall not prevail.

That it was not a strange and unknown guest who was to visit the disciples as the Comforter, the Lord most impressively declares, when He says:

Ver. 18. "*I will not leave you orphans* (Luther's rendering), *I will come to you.*"

If He had gone away without coming to them again, they would have been (He implies) *orphans*. This term beautifully expresses the love with which His "little children" clung to Him, and for the sake of which they had left the world. Compare Jeremiah li. 5, (where the literal rendering of the Hebrew is that of Luther's version: "for Israel and Judah shall not be left widowed of their God.") God's gracious name, "The Father of the fatherless," (Ps. lxxviii. 5), comes out into a strong light, when what is predicted in the Psalm (see especially verse

18) begins to receive its fulfilment. Ask thyself, whether if thou hadst not Jesus thou wouldst find thyself *widowed* and *fatherless* in this world. To such souls as without Him call themselves fatherless, Jesus is sure to come.

"I will come to you." Therefore, though *another* Comforter will be given to them, yet that other Comforter will bring Jesus Christ with Him; otherwise He never could comfort them: not as guardian of fatherless children is the Holy Ghost to prove Himself, but as assistant sent forth from the living Father to guide the brethren of the only-begotten Son into the peace of God's adoption, so that they may be able to say: "Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). As we have seen, the comforting words: *"I will come to you,"* refer ultimately to the Lord's second coming to His Church, the Bridegroom's return to the bride (Rev. xxii. 17); but yet not till the last day is His coming delayed; He who "is that Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 17) comes in the Spirit at all times, and the bride adorns herself for her marriage. Even before three days were over, the disciples were to have a fore-taste of Jesus' coming to them.

Ver. 19. *"Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also."*

As yet the world saw Him; apprehended, mocked, scourged, crucified, dead, buried, it saw Him. But then their seeing would be at end. At the last day, the world will see Him amid the terrors of His second coming; but from the world His Easter and Pentecostal approach is hidden. Because it has no eyes to see the living Christ in the Holy Ghost, through whom He is "glorified" in believers, therefore the world was not permitted to see Him in the glorified body of His resurrection (Acts x. 41); "darkness came upon" them (chap. xii. 35). But the disciples, because they were able to receive the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Life (for they saw Him and knew Him)—*they* were permitted to behold life in the risen Christ.

"I live," the Lord says; not *"I shall live,"* but now, at the present time, *"I live,"* for He *is* indeed life, He is the Living

One (Rev. i. 18); and, therefore, because He is life, as a necessary consequence He swallowed up death in victory by rising from the dead. But in respect to believers, He says: "*Ye shall live,*" because their life grows not out of themselves, but as the fruit out of Christ's life (chap. v. 57); it is as the life of the branch, which receives its life from the vine. As in verse 17, the Comforter is called "*the Spirit of Truth,*" because in believers He glorifies Christ who is *Truth*, so here He appears as the Spirit of *Life*, because in believers He glorifies Christ who is *Life*. The rejoicing hearts of the disciples must indeed have already glowed with the light and love of light when their ravished eyes beheld the Risen One; but yet Christ's precious promise: "*Ye shall live also,*" was not really fulfilled until the coming of the living and quickening One on the day of Pentecost, when they themselves, through the Comforter, were waked up and new-born unto the same life into which their risen Prince of Life had entered. Therefore this promise: "*Ye shall live also,*" applies to all believers as surely as does the promise of the Comforter. "These words it is a Christian's part firmly to embrace; and so to know his Christ in His comforting promises, that although death were threatening to stab him with his dart, and the devil were opening wide his hellish jaws upon him, he should yet not be dismayed thereat, but through faith be able to bid defiance to the devil, and say: Knowest thou not that though thou didst even devour the Lord Jesus Christ, thou hast yet been forced to give Him up again, ay! that He has in turn devoured thee? Therefore, I too am safe from thy devouring jaws, because I abide in Him, and on His account live and suffer; though I be thereupon chased out of the world, and earth be heaped over me, I let that be; but yet I shall not therefore abide in death, but I shall live with my Lord Jesus Christ, even as I believe and know that He lives." (Luther.) In the life which the disciples were to receive through the Holy Ghost, they would find that perfect satisfaction for which Philip had sighed.

Ver. 20. "*At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.*"

The Apostolic sermon on the day of Pentecost was the fruit of that knowledge which here is promised. We have no *living* knowledge of what we have in Christ until His real and eternal Oneness with the Father ("He in the *Father*, and the Father in *Him*") is revealed to us through ourselves becoming in faith spiritually one with Him ("we in *Him*, and He in *us*"). This first clause, "*I in the Father*," was calculated to give them perfect confidence in the cause of Christ, that it came from God; the second, "*Ye in Me*," revealed to them their fellowship with Christ, and their blessed interest in the whole of His work of redemption; the third, "*I in you*," gave them strength and courage for their office, to go forth with their ministry and witness to attack the world, knowing that Christ was working in them. Oh, how much there is to learn in these three short sentences: God in Christ,—I, in the sight of God, found in His Son,—and Christ in Me, because He has given me of His Spirit." (Rieger.)

In the discourse on the Bread of Life, contained in chapter vi., these gracious words, "He dwelleth in *Me* and I in *Him*," have already come before us. On the day when the Spirit of Truth revealed to those who partook of the Lord's Supper the mystery of partaking of Christ's Body and Blood, they knew that they were indeed in Him and He in them. Hear what Luther says: "Christians ought to understand these two points as being the highest and most essential to our comfort of any—how that *we are in Christ*, and *Christ in us*. The one party rises above self, the other stoops below self; for we must first of all be in Him with all that belongs to us, our sin, our death, our weakness; we must feel assured that from all that God has, through Christ, delivered, and redeemed, and saved us. Therefore we must soar above ourselves and out of ourselves into Him; ay, become wholly incorporate into Him, become His own, as having been baptised into Him, and being thereby re-

cipients of His other holy Sacrament. Thus sin, an evil conscience, death and the devil, vanish at once, so that I am able to say that I know of no death nor hell. Is there death? let him first devour my Lord Jesus Christ. Is there any hell? let it swallow up the Saviour. Can sin, or the law, or conscience condemn? let it arraign the Son of God. When that has been done, I will then give up myself to be condemned, devoured, and swallowed up. But since the Father and Christ remain alive, I will also remain alive; since He continues unsubdued by death and the devil, I likewise will continue unsubdued; for I know of a surety, that as Christ is in the Father, so I likewise am in Christ. I say, that this is the first main point by which a man passes out of himself and above himself into Christ. Next, there is in return a descent from above; as I am in Christ, so is Christ in me. I have taken a part with Him, and have crept into Him—have stepped out of the power of sin, death, and the devil, and in return, He reveals Himself in me, and says, Go, preach, console, baptise, serve thy neighbour, be obedient, patient, &c. I will be in thee, and all shall be My work; what thou doest, I will have done it: only be of good cheer, and rest bravely and fearlessly upon Me, and look to it that thou abidest in me, for then I will in return assuredly abide in thee.” (Luther.)

But what was it that the poor, weak disciples had, that there should await them a day of so bright a light, of so blessed a knowledge? What was it that brought the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, down to this little band of disciples? The Lord tells us:

Ver. 21. “*He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and manifest Myself to him.*”

That was what the disciples *had*: their Lord’s commandments, which, though in weakness, they yet in *love*, and without guile, were *keeping*; for whither should they go? without

their beloved Master they accounted themselves orphans. "If ye *continue* in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the Truth: they *had* hitherto continued to be His disciples indeed;" and therefore the Spirit of Truth was about to come to them, and enlighten them to a knowledge of the Truth which, in loving Jesus, they already loved. It is a beautiful saying of Pascal's, that "in order to love human things we must first know them; in order to know divine things, we must first love them." This agrees with what the Lord, both here and in verse 23, declares to be the condition of receiving the Spirit of Truth; and the reason why the world *cannot* receive Him is, in these words of Pascal, very clearly shown.

Perhaps the question which we should first desire to ask is a different one from that with which Judas Thaddeus afterwards interrupts the Lord; it may be this: "Lord, how is it that the Father will love, and that thou wilt love, those who first shall have loved thee?" For has not the Father *first* loved the whole world, so that He gave for it His only-begotten Son? Has not the Son *first* loved all sinners, so that He gave Himself to redeem them? How often can the love of the Father and the Son *follow* upon our love? These words tell us, "And I will manifest Myself to Him." Him only can the Father and the Son love, who has allowed himself to be drawn and prevailed upon by the divine love and pity which was first shown to him, to love Jesus and in faith to come to Him—him only whom the Gospel sees and knows the Spirit of Truth, because he loves Life, the infinite loveliness of which shines forth in Christ, in order to draw all men to Himself. "If only we are first capable of receiving, He will give us exceeding abundantly above all that we can think, above all that we could wish even to give to ourselves.

Augustine refers the *first* love of God to us, to His working within us of faith; the *second*, to His impartation to us of sight—a scriptural thought; but here the Lord speaks chiefly

of that sight to which believers should attain through His *manifestation*, the manifestation of His glory in the Spirit of Truth (Eph. i. 17, &c.).

It is the essential property of love to share everything with the beloved object, and from him to keep back nothing; and thus Christ so desires to manifest Himself to His disciples whom He loves, as that His Life may become their life, His glory their glory (chap. xvii. 21, &c.); everything will He confide to them His friends. John, the *beloved* disciple, is likewise the recipient of this *revelation*. "But the saving, practical manifestation of Jesus Christ is, that He should implant in the hearts of those who believe in Him and love Him, spiritual motives influencing their life: as when, for example, from the mystery of the Incarnation, their faith receives a living impression of divine love; when, from the mystery of the Lord's Passion, they learn to know the magnitude of their sins, earnestly to bewail them, and to be assured of their pardon; when, from the mystery of eternal happiness, they learn truly to sigh for heaven, and so on. For there Christ reveals Himself to the soul as her most precious Saviour, as her fairest Bridegroom, as her most faithful Shepherd, as her almighty King, as her all-wise Teacher, as her most willing Physician; and through this manifestation, faith, love, hope, patience, and every Christian virtue, is awakened in the hearts of the pious, and day by day increased." (J. Gerhard.)

Ver. 22. "*Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?*"

The separation which the Lord had made betwixt the world and His disciples inspires Judas with feelings of terror and surprise. Hitherto, the disciples had hoped that Christ would shortly manifest Himself to the world (Luke xxiv. 21), and in His glorious kingdom rule from Israel over all the Gentiles: what had then *happened* (thus Judas asks) that Christ should desire to hide Himself from the world, and leave it destitute of

the Spirit, without Light and Life, He who, surely, is the world's Light and Life? What had happened, that instead of a glorious kingdom of Christ, before which the world should bow, there was only to be a small, insignificant band of Christians, despised and persecuted by the world? This prospect terrified even a Thaddeus (or Labbeus; *i. e.*, the hearty, the strong). And even now, we are often disturbed by the poor appearance of the "beggar crew," to whom it is Christ's will to reveal Himself, whilst what the world thinks highly of, can neither see Him nor know Him (1 Cor. i. 26, &c.) But yet—let not your heart be troubled! It must be so. Nothing especial or new had happened, as Judas thought, which had changed the plan of Christ's kingdom; rather it was His purpose from the beginning to raise up, through His gracious word, a kingdom, which should come to those who keep His word and who love Him, but which should keep aloof from those who reject His word and who love Him not. It was judgment only that had taken place, because Light had come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light. Therefore, the answer to the question which this terrified disciple makes, is contained already in the foregoing words of Christ, which now He repeats again, while He puts forward still more emphatically, alike the comfort designed for His disciples, to whom He will reveal Him, and also the guilt of the world which rejects the comfort of His manifestation:

Ver. 23, 24. "*Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.*"

If a man love me, he will keep my words. Jesus's preventing love offers itself, in the words of the gospel, to all mankind, to become the salvation of all. If any man "thirst" for that life which is only to be found in Him who is the Saviour of sinners, such an one will, like the disciples, seek Him early;

with longing love he will hang upon His word which promises to all who believe on it life and salvation. This believing devotion of a soul to that word of Jesus, which, with preventing grace, kindles the first sparks of love in the sinner's heart, all empty of love before, is that which distinguishes him from the evil world, and makes him capable of receiving the subsequent manifestation of God's love, which is spoken of in the words, "*And my Father will love him.*"

And here let us again turn our thoughts upon the twofold love of God. God loves us before we love Him, and because He does so, He "sets Christ forth as the Mercy-seat," (Rom. iii. 25,) and in the gospel entreats us, "Be ye loved by me!" But when afterwards we lovingly seek Him in Christ, He then loves as so to be found by us, and makes all His heavenly treasures our own (Prov. viii. 17-21): "*And we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*" These words, with singular propriety, describe the glory which is given to the children of God in the New Testament. "For what greater honour and glory can there be, than that we poor, miserable men should be, upon earth, the abode of divine majesty, His garden of delight, His paradise, ay, and His heavenly kingdom?" (Luther.) The Father's love had revealed itself through the Son and in the Holy Ghost to pious men, even of the old covenant, who loved Him and kept His word: every Psalm is a fruit of this manifestation of love, and "the dwelling of the Lord of Hosts" in Zion distinctly proclaimed to the children of Israel that the living God was pleased to *dwell among them for ever* (Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14; see Ezek. xxxvii. 27). But just as it was in the incarnate Word that God first dwelt amongst us *full of grace and truth*, so His real, *eternal* abiding and dwelling within us, first really takes place through the sending of the Holy Ghost; for the Holy Ghost sanctifies the heart of every individual believer to be a temple of the living God (1 Cor. iii. 16), analogously to that work in which the same Divine Agent pre-

pared the humanity of Jesus Christ, making it a dwelling-place meet to receive "the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

We will come unto him, Christ says. At that day when the Holy Ghost filled the disciples' hearts, they knew the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Father; and because the Comforter abode with them for ever, they knew that they were habitations of the whole Holy Trinity. First, there is the *coming*, then the *taking up of the abode*. On the day of Pentecost, the Triune God came and "knocked at the door" with the sound of rushing wind; and into those who heard His voice and opened to Him the door *He entered*, to hold the Supper of His love with them, and they with Him (Rev. iii. 20). With the willing ear of love may we ourselves listen to every knock of the Comforter when He comes to us, for then we shall also be favoured with His indwelling; then our life will be filled with peace in the blessed fellowship of love into which the Triune God enters with us, poor, unworthy sinners that we are, while He designs to sanctify us wholly, that our whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; and then, at the last day, the promise shall again re-echo in the great voice coming forth from the Throne: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, *and He will dwell with them*" (Rev. xxi. 3).

"When Ignatius, in the presence of the Roman Emperor, styled himself *Christophoros* or *Theophoros*—i.e., Christ-bearer or God-bearer—it was but natural that the heathen emperor should turn upon him with rage; but *we* admire the humble loftiness of his God-wedded soul, and only long to possess the same good conscience, that we also may be able to make the words of that noble father of the Church our own. Dear Jesus, to keep thy word! to be loved of thy Father!—what a glory of Pentecostal grace is this! But how is all this outdone by the voice of Christ and His apostles calling out to us, 'Temples of God are ye!' Can we bear it? *Can* such a poor vessel as this endure under so great a glory? Oh, the joys of thy

indwelling, thou eternal Triune God!—or shall we rather say : Oh, the terrors of thy indwelling ? For what is man, that thou art mindful of him ? or the son of man, that thou shouldest thus visit him ? Dust we are, and sinners, and yet called to be thy temples ! Oh, give us what thou dost graciously promise, and then do thou thyself make it so that we may be able to bear it, and worthily to praise thee for it ; that we may be really happy under the weight of our happiness, and with joy, as meet it is, extol thy holy name.” (Löhe.)

To the promise of the highest blessedness which God has prepared for those who love Him, there now follows the mournful complaint of God’s rejected love, “*He that loveth me not,*” almost involuntarily we complete the sentence with the apostle’s words, “He is accursed” (1 Cor. xvi. 22) ; for in fact, instead of allowing himself to be drawn by love from death into life, from darkness into light, from the world into heaven, the man who has no love to Jesus thrusts away from him both light and life, and the wrath of God abides upon him. Here, again, we hear that complaint, “My word hath no place in you” (chap. viii. 37), with which the Lord upbraided the carnal mind of the Jews—those Jews who, instead of loving Him, hated Him, and therefore, instead of keeping, rejected His word, and therewith His *Father’s* word also. They heard not in His *words* the one sweet *word* of the gospel, and to them, therefore, they were not the words of eternal life.

Thus, then, is the question of the pious Judas answered. The Holy Ghost cannot to the world reveal the Father in the Son, because the world loves not the Father who speaks to it by the mouth of the Son ; but to the disciples, and to all who have disciples’ hearts, Christ *will* reveal Himself, because He *can* do so ; for they reciprocate His love, hearing and keeping His word as being the Father’s word, while they also anxiously *wait* for the promised Comforter, who shall realise to them the manifestation of Christ as a coming of the Triune God within their hearts to dwell there. How tenderly does the Lord com-

fort His desolate disciples ! and how plainly does He point out to us the sure and simple way to perfect peace ! *To love Him and to keep His word*—it is *that* which will bring into our souls an eternal pentecostal rejoicing, and nothing else ever can.

Ver. 25, 26. "*These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*"

"He is hastening to conclude His discourse, inasmuch as He is about to rise and go thence to His sufferings ; for all this discourse has been spoken whilst they were still at table. I have spoken many good things to you, He says, to comfort and to strengthen you, in order that my departure from you may not trouble nor alarm you. Now ye have indeed heard these words and these sayings of mine with your bodily ears, because I am personally present with you, but their import is so high that ye cannot as yet understand them. When ye shall see me taken from you, all that I have now been saying to comfort you will soon be gone and forgotten. But afterwards, when the Comforter shall come, whom I have promised to you, He shall so exquisitely teach you, that ye shall be able to remember all that I have said to you, and understand it perfectly." (Luther.)

The disciples now interrupted the Lord with no more questions, but He saw that they had not really taken in the comfort of His words ; and therefore He referred them to their Helper, their *Paraclete*, the Holy Ghost ; He would bring to their remembrance not only the consolatory words of this His last evening, but *all things* that He had ever said to them. This is to be the Holy Spirit's office, for He is sent by the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. The place which the Saviour had hitherto filled with His disciples, when He fed them with the words of eternal life, was, from henceforth after a new way, to be supplied by the *other* Comforter, the Holy Ghost ; for He is the true vicar and vicegerent of Christ upon earth, obtained

through Christ's meritorious departure, and out of Christ's fulness drawing forth whatever truth-blessings he bestows upon Christians (chap. xvi. 14). Just as the Son, having come in His Father's name, speaks His Father's word who has sent Him (chap. v. 43), so the Holy Ghost, being sent by the Father in the name of the Son, points out in His *teaching* everything which, in the Father's name, had been said to His disciples by the Son. The Holy Ghost was to *teach* them all things, by *bringing to their remembrance* all things which they had heard from their Lord.

We can now fully understand why it is that the Holy Ghost can only find entrance to those who *love* Jesus and *keep* His word; for it is only they whom He can *remind* of what has been gathered by love in the memory of the heart. The mind of the disciples who loved Jesus was like a fruitful, genial garden, in which was scattered the noble seed of the Divine Word. As yet but very little had sprung up, but thousands of living grains were germinating in the fine rich soil. When the rains of Pentecost fell, there was a vigorous sprouting forth in Jesus' garden; but there was not one of Life's blossoms and fruits which did not grow from the seed of His own word. Abundantly fruitful as is the teaching of the Holy Ghost, which up to the present day is busily working in the apostolic word, and, through that, in the Church of the Lord, it is still nothing but *calling to remembrance*, nothing but the interpreting and examining, the applying and realising of all that the Lord said to His apostles. One glorious, imperishable fruit of this precious promise do we enjoy in reading St. John's Gospel. Into what close, intimate friendship must the loving disciple have been admitted with the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, from whose faithful reminding His Gospel has proceeded! Yet *something* of this teaching of the Comforter by bringing to remembrance is experienced by every Christian who loves the Saviour and keeps His word. Not at once does our understanding grasp the whole word of God, but if we truly love it and honour its

every saying, there, in His own good time, the Holy Ghost comes and reveals to our hearts just those sayings of Christ which are the most especially salutary and comforting in our particular case. And what hours of joy are those which we then experience !

All that the Lord had said to His disciples, to be afterwards brought to their remembrance by the Holy Ghost, He now at parting sums up in this one word—*peace*.

Ver. 27. "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*"

"These are the last words as of one who is about to take his departure, and who, before leaving, will say: Good night, and give his blessing. This shall be my farewell, He says; I am about to depart, and have nothing to leave you in this world; but my testament, that which I would fain bequeath to you, is this—*peace*." (Luther.) It was the custom in Israel, both in meeting and parting, to greet one another by wishing them *peace* (e.g. 1 Sam. i. 17). This form of greeting here becomes new and full of grace and truth in the mouth of the Saviour going now to the Father. As if He had said: I bequeath to you *peace*, Israel's accustomed farewell blessing; but happy indeed are ye in receiving such a salutation. For verily I say unto you, that kings and prophets have desired to see the happiness which in greeting they wish one another, and have not seen it; but, from henceforth, ye shall see it, for it abideth with you and shall be in you. In the *peace* which I bequeath to you, it shall go well with you for ever, because it is *my* peace, real peace; for not as *the world* giveth give I unto you; not death under the appearance of life, but in very truth, life and eternal peace. The world talks indeed of peace and happiness and prosperity; but as the Lord declares: "*They say peace, peace ! when there is no peace*" (Jer. vi. 14). The world neither *has* peace nor *gives* it; that which it fancies to be peace, and which

it holds out as peace, is nothing but a narcotic, which puts sorrow to sleep, only suddenly to wake up again.

“The peace of God doth glad the heart,
While, world, *thy* peace but bringeth smart.”

Christ both *has* and *gives* peace: “*MY peace I GIVE unto you.*” The peace which He Himself has, because He is in the Father and the Father in Him—the *Son’s peace*—He now gives to His disciples, whom through His going away He has reconciled with God, and for whom He has obtained the power to become God’s children. It is from the fulness of Christ’s peace that His disciples receive their peace. The Christian’s heart is pacified and content: pacified through God’s gift and content with God’s dealings. As Leo the Great says: “To be at one with God’s will, and satisfied only with the things of God: this is to have true peace.” On the day that the disciples received the Comforter, and thereby knew that they were in Christ and Christ in them, then they became conscious of possessing the peace which the Lord here bequeaths to them as *His* peace,—the peace with which again He greets them when He first appeared to them after His resurrection (chap. xx. 19),—the peace which is in fact the sweet core and kernel of the glory which He has given to His Church (chap. xvii. 22). Now is Israel’s longing for peace satisfied, for “with peace has the Lord blessed His people” (Ps. xxix. 11), by being the Saviour upon whom “the chastisement of our peace” (by which our peace is gained) has been laid. Henceforth, the New Testament Israel’s greeting of peace is true and potent; for Israel is now filled with *that* peace which Christ has and which Christ gives.

The fruit which springs from peace in Christ is contained in the words: “*Let not your heart be troubled!*” This word of consolation, whose note we hear throughout the whole of the Lord’s farewell discourse, behoves to be again verbally expressed here, when the entire legacy which the Saviour bequeaths to His disciples is made over to them as a legacy of “peace.” “Why will ye allow yourselves to be troubled or terrified? Do

ye really hear that I say ye should not do it? I,—I have told you, and I tell you again, *let not your heart be troubled!* And what I tell you, my Father tells you likewise, and all the angels in heaven give their yea thereto, and there is no other word in heaven but this: therefore calm yourselves and fear not! For I promise you peace, and I give unto you peace, my Father's and My peace, grace, comfort, and help; what then is there wrong with me, or what reason can ye have that ye should be afraid." (Luther.)

There is nothing that Christians should fear so much as *fear*; under all the cross which those who live in Christ as they should do, cannot escape, let them remember this, that the *fearful*, those who are timid and cowardly, are placed foremost in the list of those who will have their part in the lake of fire (Rev. xxi. 8). See also Deut. xx. 1-8, and Matt. viii. 26. And what is there to dismay the Christian heart in which Christ's spirit of peace dwells to expel thence all fear? Let only the Comforter put us in remembrance that through Christ we have no longer any reason to fear death and condemnation, then sorrow in the world will find us prepared, and nothing will dismay us. Oh, how many, many times has the Holy Ghost since then borne home to troubled hearts the Lord's salutation of peace, and therewith comforted them even in their deepest sorrow.

Ver. 28. "*Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.*"

Gerhard shows the connexion between this verse and the previous ones, thus: "Before, the Lord has been explaining that His departure, the announcement of which so greatly troubled the disciples, was *expedient for them*; now He proceeds to say that His departure would be *glorious for Him*. After telling them that His departure would be no *loss to them*, He now adds that to *Him* it would be *gain*. In the foregoing discourse He has been comforting the disciples by bidding them not to be

alarmed on their own account; now He comforts them by bidding them not be alarmed *on His*. The disciples had indeed heard the word: "*I go away*," and sorrow in consequence had so filled their hearts that they could hardly take in the word of comfort: "*I will come again unto you*." They loved their Lord indeed, but they were not yet perfect, nor wholly unselfish in their love. Had they loved Him not so much as the man who (as they thought) was to redeem Israel, but rather as the only-begotten Son of God, who behoved through suffering to enter into His glory, they would then have *rejoiced* when He said: "*I go unto the Father*;" the joyful word: "*to the Father*" would have completely lighted up the sorrowful one: "*I go away*," and have made it full of sweetness and comfort to them. For how could it be other than a joyous thing for Jesus—and if for Him, therefore for them who love Him—that He should go to the Father? Out of the form of a servant into majesty, out of lowliness into exaltation, out of shame into glory: how could that passage be other than a joyous one? It is in this connexion that the word craves to be understood,—a word which throws a bright light of joy upon the Son's departure to the Father: "*For my Father is greater than I*." "*I go away* thither, He says, where I shall be greater than I am now, viz., to the Father. For the kingdom which I receive at the right hand of the Father is over all; and it is better that I should pass out of littleness and weakness (in which He walked upon earth, when He had to suffer and die) into the power and sovereignty in which the Father is and reigns in almighty Majesty. Thus, of His present position which He held upon earth, it was truly said: *My Father is greater than I*, because now I am a servant; but when I come to my Father, then I shall be greater, even as great as my Father is, I shall rule with Him in equal power and majesty." (Luther.)

He who is of equal power and honour with the Father, as our Gospel so powerfully proves, in His state of humiliation had emptied Himself of the divine greatness and glory; in the days

of His flesh He offered up supplications and prayers out of the deep, calling with strong crying and tears unto God in the highest; but after He was made perfect in the obedience of suffering (Heb. v. 8), whilst full of the love of a Son, He did what the Father had commanded Him, He was exalted to the glory in which from the beginning, as the eternal word, He was with God and was God (chap. xvii. 5). And this His glorification Jesus earnestly desired, and true love to Him would assuredly have made the disciples sharers in His joy at the thought of His glorification, just as true love to those dear to us, who die happy and enter into Paradise, turns sorrow for our own loss into joy for their gain. There is no joy so heavenly as the joy which love experiences at Jesus being crowned with victory and honour. Dost thou know aught of this joy? Examine thyself and see, whether with thy whole heart thou dost offer up the petition: "Hallowed be Thy name," and whether thou dost rejoice when it is answered. If we love God supremely, then the glorification of His name, in the coming of His kingdom and its victory over all, would give us joy, not chiefly on account of our own bliss, but chiefly for God's honour's sake, which in Christ triumphs over all the assaults of the prince of this world.

But though first for Jesus' sake and out of pure love, yet afterwards *for their own sake* ought the disciples to have rejoiced that He was going to the Father who was greater than He. For it was expedient for them that the humiliation of the Son of Man, on account of which He was for a time less than the Father, should end in His exaltation; since by virtue thereof all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, in order that He—"to whom as God the kingdom appertains, and who as man the sovereignty sustains"—might, by sending the Comforter into the hearts of His believers, save them and preserve them in the kingdom of His grace and peace, until they should also "appear with Him in glory." "Therefore—says Luther—we have every reason to rejoice, instead of being troubled, at His departure, because thereby He becomes a greater, a mightier

Christ, and means to make His poor, weak Christians, great likewise." *At present*, while Jesus was still before them in lowly form, the comfort of that promise: "No man shall pluck them out of My hand" (chap. x. 28) was inaccessible to them; for that His hand could be one with the Almighty Father's hand, was what they, with their weak, dull hearts, so clinging to what was earthly and visible, were altogether unable to reach; but very soon, the Comforter should bring to their remembrance the words of Jesus, and they should have peace in believing.

Ver. 29. "*And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.*"

"The word is the seed, faith (together with peace and joy) is the fruit." (Bengel.) It did come to pass that the Lord went away and came again, and the disciples believed. But as it came to pass not for the disciples only, but for us also, so the Holy Ghost would fain teach and increase *our* faith likewise. Let us pray for Him, that He may come, and hearken to Him because He is there.

Vers. 30, 31. "*Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.*"

It was love to His disciples which suggested to our Lord, on the night in which He was betrayed, all those tender words to them; and He now entreats them the more diligently to surrender themselves to His word, because He would so soon have said His all to them.

"*For the prince of this world cometh*"—and Christ is armed, ready for the battle which the enemy is about to offer Him. In Gethsemane it was shown how and to what end the prince of this world came and attacked the Saviour: it was in order to prevent His departure, through the bitter suffering of death, to the Father. The devil desired to continue to be prince of the world, and not to be cast out of his principality (chap. ii. 31);

therefore he sought through the terrors of hell and of death to scare the Saviour away from the path of the cross, along which in pure filial obedience He was departing to the Father. But, as Luther says, Christ is comforting and fortifying Himself against the troublesome devil when He says: "*and he hath nothing in me*"—nothing, not a particle of anything belonging to him, not the smallest hook of sinful lust by which he could lay hold of Me and cause Me to fall. Christ's temptations came to Him, not from within, from His flesh, but from without, from the prince of the world. This doctrine we have often before had presented to us in the course of the Gospel narrative (see especially chap. viii. and xii. 27); for even after the temptation in the wilderness, the tempter repeated his seeking sin and not finding it in the holy Son of Man perpetually (Luke iv. 13); but it was in the history of the Passion that the perfect obedience of our High Priest, who was separate from sinners, was to be put to the very uttermost proof (Heb. vii. 26). Therefore, with full assurance of victory He goes to meet the enemy. Not because He "who has the power of death" has any claim upon Him, the living One, does He subject Himself to his power; but—as He says—"*that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do; therefore arise, let us go hence!*"

In order to prove His loving obedience to His Father in laying down His life (chap. x. 18), He goes forth to meet the approaching prince of this world; and His course is guided, as by filial love to His Father, so also by a Saviour's love to a lost world—the world which should cease to be "the world" through its coming to know the redeeming self-sacrifice of the Son of God, having passed from under the dominion of its prince into the love of God in His only begotten Son.

"Arise, let us go hence!" the Lord says. If we would follow Christ our Captain in the participation of His holy cross, and His victorious conflict with the prince of the world, so that in our life and death the world may behold a testimony to the love

of God in Christ; then let us know that we cannot do this until we have first appropriated to ourselves His word: "The prince of this world cometh, *and hath nothing in me.*" Let Gregory the Great tell us how this may be accomplished: "Let us daily," he says, "with tears consider with what fierce wrath the prince of this world comes to us, and will especially come to us at the day of our death, in order to find in us his own works; for he came to the Lord our God when He was dying in the flesh, to see if he could find in Him ought belonging to himself, though in Him he could find nothing. What, then, shall wretched sinners as we are, say? What shall we do who have committed innumerable sins? What answer can we make to the adversary who comes to us, and finds in us, alas! *much* of his own? What other answer than only this, which is our sure refuge and our firm hope—that we through grace are made one with Him to whom the prince of this world came, but could find *nothing* of his own. We are redeemed from the slavery of sin to perfect freedom, because we are united to Him who alone is perfectly free from sin and death. Therefore, however much the prince of this world may have in us out of Christ, he yet cannot swallow us up in death, because we have become members of Him in whom he has nothing.

When the Comforter comes and teaches us to know that we are in Christ and Christ in us, then *His* having overcome the world and its prince will comfort us (chap. xvi. 33); even in the midst of trouble we shall rest in peace, and be able to say with St. John: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our *faith*."

The Vine and the Branches.

CHAPTER XV. 1-17.

Blessed Vine, grant that through faith we, as living branches, may cling around Thee, and ever abide in Thee. Amen.

THE Lord's summons: "Arise, let us go hence!" had roused the disciples from the sorrow which was making them drooping and weary (Luke xxii. 45), and they had risen up from the supper table. There they were now standing, the Saviour in the midst, the disciples around Him. None dared to ask Him, "Whither goest thou" (chap. xvi. 5)? but nevertheless, with apprehension and sorrow at the thought of their approaching orphanhood, their inquiring souls hung upon His holy lips, craving yet further satisfaction; there, too, was the heart of Jesus overflowing with love to His own, and He still lingered awhile, in order once more, out of the fulness of His own peace, to speak to them the peace-giving words: "Let not your heart be troubled;" once more to deposit precious pearls of comfort in the secret storehouse of their heart, which the Comforter should by-and-by bring forth from thence to be the everlasting riches, both of them and of all believers. The hour of departure was at hand; but though *parting* from them, the Lord yet *abides* with them and they with Him. The eternal communion of love between Christ and Christians, and the fruit which springs therefrom, is the subject of this discourse upon which we are now entered. *Peace in believing* is the first gift of the Comforter; the second is, *the fruit of the life in love*.

Ver. 1. *I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman."*

Just before had the Lord been drinking of the fruit of the vine with His disciples for the last time, and with a view to the whole preservation of His kingdom upon earth until His coming again, He had then blessed and set apart the juice of the vine wherein is its life, for the purpose of sacramental communion with the blood of His sacrificed life. In the holy supper the Lord proves His character as the true Vine. What Israel, as being called God's Vine (Ps. lxxx. 9, &c. ; Is. v. 1, &c. ; Jer. ii. 21) should have been, and of which the golden vine clustering round the temple door was a daily reminder—that Israel could only really become in Christ; and the disciples, as "Israelites indeed," and branches of the Old Testament vine, receive the substance of the heavenly blessings, which dwelt in the natural Israel merely in shadows, only by being made partakers, in the blood of the New Testament, of the divine life of Christ. "Even under the former dispensation of God," says Rieger, "it was His aim to have a vineyard in His people, to plant His people as a vine, and to be gladdened with its fruit. But this was only partially realised, until from *this* vine came forth sap and strength ; that which first dressed and prepared the 'peculiar people,' so as to become rich in good works, was the Spirit of Christ." Now is fulfilled at length God's earnest desire: "Oh that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me !" (Deut. v. 29.) Now have saints become true branches of the true Vine. That of which the earthly vine is a natural foreshadowing and type, and which the old covenant people represented as the heavenly shadow, has now appeared full of grace and truth in Christ and His sacramental community. Christ, then, is the true Vine in the same way that he is the true *Bread* (chap. vi. 32); He does not represent the vine, but the vine represents Him, is a type of what He is.

It is not without reason that this discourse of the vine

and the branches has been called a sacramental discourse. Yet, however decidedly the discourse takes its rise from the wine of the holy supper, yet we could not venture to say that it exclusively sets forth the union between Christ and His Church, which is wrought in the sacrament. Rather does it embrace the whole mystery of Christ's communion of love and life with His believers, which finds in the sacrament of Christ's body and blood its corporeal realisation and completion. As little as the precious words, "*Ye in me, and I in you,*" exclude reference to the holy supper, just as little do these words, "*I am the Vine, ye are the branches,*" exclude reference to the spiritual indwelling of Christ in His believers, which is promised in chap. xiv.

"*I am the true Vine;*" in these words that which is the keynote to the whole of those discourses—viz., "Let not your heart be troubled," sweetly rings again, and all the more distinctly since the Lord adds, "*and my Father is the Husbandman.*" To the disciples, the Lord's departure seemed to be no joy, but only grief; their heart shrank back with terror when He said, "Rise up, let us go hence!" But yet, let not your heart be troubled! Christ is the true Vine and His Father is the Husbandman, therefore He shall never be torn away by the prince of this world; rather the hour is even now come when the Vine shall spread gloriously, and bring forth much fruit. Just as the corn of wheat abides alone and without fruit unless it fall into the ground and die, so also would the Vine abide alone, without sap, full branches or excellent fruit, unless the Husbandman pruned it and sunk it deeper in the ground. It was at Christmas that the heavenly Gardener planted the true Vine; on Good Friday and Easter He sank it deeper in the soil; and on Whit-Sunday the vintage commenced. Sent by the Father, the eternal Word came into our flesh and blood; then it was that the Husbandman *planted* the true Vine; as Augustine says: "The Vine and the branches are both of one nature. Therefore has the Son of God become man, that

He might be the Vine in human nature, and that we men might become its branches." But in order that the true Vine might spread itself abroad in many fruitful branches, in order that the Life of the incarnate Word might become the Life of all flesh (chap. xvii. 2), His blood, the true life-giving drink of all who without Him have no life in themselves (chap. vi. 55), therefore it was necessary that His flesh should be *given*, and His blood *shed*, and that through the death which He suffered in the flesh for all, He should be glorified to have "power given Him over all flesh."

Thus was the true Vine pruned by the Husbandman and planted deeper; and the disciples should have rejoiced at it. Whatever the Father commands the Son in the flesh to do and to suffer (chap. xiv. 31), has all of it this for its subject—that the precious Vine may bring forth much fruit. And as the disciples might feel that they had no cause to be troubled on *His* account, because He is the true Vine and His Father the Husbandman; so also they need not either be alarmed on *their own* account, because they are branches of the true Vine, to which the Husbandman's loving care extends likewise; so that even their afflictions shall bear fruit of life if only they abide as branches of the Vine.

"See, the Lord is thus comforting His own self as He is now about to go to His sufferings and cross; even in this consolation our Type and Example! I am indeed the true Vine, and ye are mine and the Father's branches; so that if ever there has been a vine nurtured with tenderness and severity alike, pruned and cleaned, I am that Vine. Therefore, let what will happen, I am content, and the devil and the world may do what they can! If the devil could carry out his wicked will, he would soon slay us with his knife, and poison and choke us with his dung. But God lays hold of him and says: Devil, it is true that thou art a murderer and a miscreant, but I will employ thee for my own purposes; thou shalt act only as my pruning-knife, and the world and all that belongs to thee I will use as

my manure for my precious vineyard, that it may be all the better thereby." (Luther.)

It is a most suggestive thought that it is to a *vine* that the Lord compares Himself, and His disciples to *vine branches*. A palm-tree and its branches would no doubt have struck us as more stately. But the noble fruit of wine grows on just the meanest-looking wood; and this wood, without form and beauty, is yet flexible and sinewy, supple, and not easily broken by the wind; there is nothing that grows which needs more assiduous care in digging about it, in dunging, binding up, in pruning, and in fencing, &c., and there is none which yields a more plentiful return when well cared for. Thus is it with the Church.

Ver. 2. "*Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*"

Are there, then, branches on the vine which do *not* bear fruit? Yes; such a branch was Judas Iscariot; such branches are all Christians, who, being planted through baptism into Christ and His life, and called through the Gospel to a life in Christ, and nourished through the Holy Supper into a corporeal life in Christ, yet do not bring forth any *fruit of life in love* (Gal. v. 22)—these are all branches on the vine which the Gardener, without any regard to their perhaps very handsome leaves, *takes away*.

Either *take away* or *purge*, either *prune* or *cut off*: one of the two the Gardener does to *every* branch of the vine; and those who will not submit to the purging process of pruning, are taken away by being cut off. "If thou wilt not endure that what is evil in thee shall be taken away, thou must endure being taken away thyself" (Bengel.) See St. Mark ix. 49. The condescending love of the heavenly Husbandman discovers the very first germ of fruit in the branches of His vine, even while it is as yet scarce discernible (Isa. lxv. 8); and He will tend and watch over it through all the painful, yet salutary, course of pruning and

purging, while He removes all wild and worthless wood which is depriving it of sap, and hindering the fruit. Knowest thou ought of this faithful, painstaking discipline of the love of God, inexorably requiring fruit? The disciples had been experiencing it for three years inwardly, and in part also outwardly ; but the more abundantly that the Vine would now henceforward pour its life-sap into the branches, the more carefully would the Husbandman now henceforth purge the faithful branches, that they might bear *more* fruit ; and this He did, inwardly, through the purifying discipline of the Holy Ghost ; outwardly, through chastisement in many tribulations (Acts xv. 8, 9.) In chapter xxi. 18 we find a special application to St. Peter of this passage concerning the purifying of the branches. Blessed are the followers of Christ, who, in all that they suffer as *branches*, see the "filling up," as St. Paul says, of those sufferings which the Husbandman has measured out to the Vine as a whole (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11 ; Col. i. 24 ; 1 Pet. iv. 13).

When the holy *Arndt* heard or sung the words in the well-known hymn,—

"The world has falsely me abused,
And with lies laid many a snare,"

he was wont to cover his head and pray ; and on being asked why he did so, he said, "These words always bring back to my mind the grace which my God has shown towards me through enemies and slanderers ; because thereby He is making me to grow in my Christianity, and in my habits of prayer and devotion."

Ver. 3. "*Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*"

The first branches were even now clean [the emphasis is on "*ye*"] ; a part in their cleanness also have they who believe in Christ through their word. The disciples, as fruitful branches of the Vine, were capable of being *made* more and more *clean*, for the very reason that they *were* already clean. *Augustine* says, "The branch bears fruit because it is clean, and that it may

bear more fruit it is made clean. Thus may the Husbandman purge the clean, *i.e.*, the fruitful, in order that the cleaner they become the more fruitful they may be." We are reminded here of chapter xiii. 10, where we read : "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit ; and *ye are clean*, but not all (for He knew who should betray Him)."

The continued cleansing of those who, by the word of Jesus, have been already pronounced clean, corresponds exactly to the continued washing of the feet of those who, in the morning bath, have washed wholly clean. The *bath of justification* comes first, the *sanctifying feet-washing* comes after. He who is *not* washed, who has not become, through faith and repentance, and forgiveness of sins, in this way attained, *wholly clean* in his inmost heart,—so clean that God looks upon him as altogether righteous (1 Cor. vi. 11), such an one gets no good from any feet-washing ; it will avail nought for him though he should outwardly cease from this or that sin ; he *cannot* follow after sanctification—a reconciled heart is indispensable.

And what was it that made the disciples, those weak, fragile twigs, clean ? *The word.* The word of life, the sweet Gospel, which the Lord Jesus had *spoken to them*, and which they had received in faith into their hearts. None but Jesus can comfort thus ! Here, poor faint-heart, thou seest what it is that thy Saviour's eye looks for when it is seeking for purity from all sin in thee ; it looks not at that which thou art without Him, nor even at thy much or little fruit, but at that which thou art through the word of His grace, which declares thee to be clean, and free from all sin, and which swears to thee : "Thou art *righteous* in My sight." Believest thou that ? Now, even though thou couldst not believe it more firmly than the disciples believed it at that time, yet be comforted ; for it depends not on the strength and purity of thy *faith*, but on the strength and purity of the *word* ; and the Comforter, who comes to all who love Jesus and keep His word, will also change *thy* weakness into strength, and *thy* sadness into joy.

But let us learn from one of these disciples, who were even now clean, that from the comfortable assurance of being clean, which rests on the word, there must spring the heart's desire for a yet more perfect cleansing. Both these ideas St. John expresses ; the one when he says, "The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7 ; iii. 3), and the other: "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"—purifies and sanctifies *himself*, in that he unresistingly *allows* himself to be purified and sanctified by the Husbandman.

Ver. 4, 5. "*Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches : he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without Me ye can do nothing.*"

The *word* had made the disciples clean : the word of His *preaching*, which they believed, and the "visible word" in the *sacrament* (as Augustine beautifully expresses it), of which they had been made partakers—it was now necessary that in faith they should *abide* in this gracious word, and through the word in *Christ*, in order that He, as he is so willing to do, may be able to abide *in them*, and that thus they may receive the blessing promised in chapter vi. 56. Christ abides in them who abide in Him (ver. 16.) It is *He*, not *we*, who commences this gracious union ; but if He should ever leave us, it would be because we shall *first* have left Him (2 Chron. xv. 2 ; Hos. iv. 6 ; Jer. xv. 6.) *To abide*—that carries all. "Perseverance," says Bernhard, "is the only King's daughter, the sum of all virtues, and their perfection ; the shrine of all good, and its strength, without which no man shall see God."

What a condescending and kind command is this that He gives, *Abide in Me!* It is from pure and stupendous love that He thus speaks. The Vine may live without the branches, and is able to replace three fresh ones for one that is cast off ; but the branch cannot live without the Vine. With impressive

earnestness the Lord would engrave it on our memory : “ *I am the VINE, ye are the BRANCHES.*” If you would fain be something else than branches, and draw your life *from your own selves*, you would be liars ; for as truly as I am the Vine, so truly are you the branches, and nothing else, and in yourselves ye have no life, but receive all life from Me. If there be any fruit borne which is well-pleasing to the Husbandman, and whose taste is sweet to Him, it may, indeed, hang on the branch ; but it is the Vine which bears both branch and fruit, and the Vine’s sap it is which runs through both. The Christian’s holy thoughts, his holy words, his holy works, which, when sweetened by the flavour of love, are well-pleasing to God, are simply fruits of the branches which abide on the Vine, and which have running through them the life-sap of the Vine ; they are simply gifts received out of the fulness of Christ, who is the love’s treasure of the heart, the love’s flavour of the mouth, the love’s strength of the hands ; and thus what is written comes to pass : “ I am like a green fir-tree. *From Me* is thy fruit found” (Hos. xiv. 8.) See also 1 John ii. 28, and iii. 24, where the Lord’s words are re-echoed from the lips of the disciple whom He loved.

“ *For without Me ye can do nothing.*” Our power to do reaches exactly so far as our abiding in Christ, and His abiding in us ; out of Him we can do *nothing* ; in Him we can do *much*, ay, *all things* (2 Cor. iii. 5 ; Phil. iv. 13.) This is a sure mark of true Christianity, when this saying—in the German Bible it is generally printed in large characters—is from day to day learned more thoroughly from experience. “ In the spiritual kingdom, where we have to deal with God, and before God touching our conscience, there is nothing which is pure or good in us, but everything that *we* are, and everything that *we* have, is altogether steeped in sins. All that is in our will is evil, and all that is in our understanding is mere blindness.” (Luther.) Even believers must, without ceasing, be spelling at these words. Man, when renewed to life in Christ, is not like a clock, which, once wound up, goes its four and twenty hours, but he is like a

fountain, which ceases to send up its waters the moment that its underground spring is choked up ; or he is like a branch, which immediately begins to wither so soon as its fibres cease to draw nourishment from the stem. So soon as the commerce is interrupted between our poverty and Christ's riches, it is all over with our doing ; or if we do anything which looks like fruit from the branch, it is nothing but wild grapes, "servant's toil, not the child's work." May God guard us from the deception which substitutes the activity of our spirit for the operation of the Holy Ghost ! and may He teach us keenly to distinguish *nature* from *grace*, as the substitute for which alas ! it too often creeps in. And because everything depends upon *abiding* in Christ, let us never undertake to do anything *to-day*, thinking to derive the necessary strength for it from *yesterday* : nothing is more pitiable than a Christianity which, instead of present life, brings before God the recollected leavings of past life. It is surely not without meaning that the twelve loaves of shew-bread, in which Israel presented to the Lord the fruits of His good pleasure to them, were required every week to be renewed. Mouldy bread He will not eat.

Ver. 6. "*If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered : and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*"

To be unfruitful for the kingdom of heaven is to be ripe for hell. He is undone already who simply does *nothing* for the kingdom of heaven ; but the empty place of this nothing will be filled up by a frightful something from hell. Just as *abiding* in Christ infers grace for grace, fruit for fruit, so *not abiding* in Christ draws after it the judgment of being rejected, the successive steps to which are presented to us in the words—*Cast forth, wither, gather, cast into the fire, burn*. These are the five steps in the judgment ; the complete execution of which is, by God's long-suffering, delayed. For a long time the husbandman tries his utmost with the branch which bears no fruit, and does not at once take it away (ver. 2) ; but with greater solicitude and

earnestness still does he care for the branch on which fruit had already set, and which afterwards is withering. But when all labour is lost upon the branch which is withered and dead, it is, without fail, cast out from the vineyard. This is what, in a spiritual manner, happens with the branches of the true Vine, when they are given over to the ruin of their falling away, and are forsaken by God's gracious hand. This took place with Judas Iscariot, in the moment when the Lord said to him, "That thou doest do quickly!" "He went *immediately* out, and it was night." "This judgment of itself were fearful enough if it were believed, viz., that a man should know himself cast off from Christ and Christianity, and deprived of the word and sacrament of Christ's intercession, of His blood and Spirit, of all that Christ or Christianity contains. This of itself is a doom only too horrible, but which brings with it afterwards one much greater still." (Luther.)

The cast out branch *withers*; whatever remains of sap it might have had so long as it hung on ever so slightly to the vine, now quickly dries up; it becomes a hard piece of wood, which can no longer be bent, only broken. A man may refuse to be bent by grace, but he cannot hinder himself from being broken by wrath. Judas is a fearful example of this: he *withered* in one day. We may indeed place a cast-off branch in water, and by that means keep it for a time from completely withering; but it is of no lasting good: so it is no use for a man inwardly dead and forsaken by the Holy Ghost to force forward for a while the appearance of a pious life from his own strength; it cannot last long—seldom until his end, and then his withered state is manifest.

These two first steps of the judgment: the being *cast away*, and the *withering*, lie within the limits of this mortal life. The third step, the *gathering* of the withered branches, lies on the border between time and eternity. "Men gather *them*"—there are *many*, then, who go the way of Judas. This *gather* is a fearful word. The company of Korah, who *gathered* them-

selves together against Moses and Aaron (Num. xvi. 5); Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles and Jews, who *gathered* themselves together against God's Christ (Acts iv. 27); and before our eyes, the "Free Churches," who, being cast forth from Christ's vineyard, and withered, *gather* themselves together, and have over them a king from the bottomless pit (Rev. ix. 11); and all the *gatherings* of the wicked (Ps. xxvi. 5), who set up their errors like gathering standards by the side of the altars of the Lord, by the side of His word and sacraments; the giddy companies and bands of the ungodly and the scornful (Ps. i. 1)—all these are only examples of this "*gathering*," and they are preumbrations of its final accomplishment at the end of the world, when the hellish company of the castaways will be fully known, when the reapers, the holy angels of judgment, will *gather* all the weeds and all the withered branches *first*, before the casting into the fire, and will bind them in bundles, that like and like (as Ahitophel and Judas, Jezebel and Herodias, &c.) may company together, as in this world's pleasure, so in eternal pain (Matt. xiii. 30).

Now follows the two last steps of judgment which are laid in eternity: men *cast them into the fire*, and they must *burn*. The greater the indifference and contempt which the rejected feel for being *cast forth* from the vineyard in this world, the more horrible will be to them the being *cast into* the fire which thereupon follows in the next world. The wood of the vine only serves for one of two things—either for *bearing fruit* or for *burning*; and if it bears no fruit it is useless above all other kinds of wood, and only fit for the fire: of this the Lord reminds even the branches of his Old Testament vine, the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Ezek. xv.) "One of two things appertains to the branch—either the vine or the fire. If it is not on the vine, it will be in the fire." (Augustine.) And this fire is the true fire, which as far surpasses the perishable type as the eternal fruit of the branches which abide in the true Vine surpasses the sweetest juice of the branches of the perish-

able vine: the *eternal* fire, into which once thrown, the branches must *burn*, without even being *consumed* (Mark ix. 43). Oh, what would not the condemned give if they could be consumed by this burning!

“Let not your heart be troubled!” To this key-note our tender Lord now hastens back, with a gracious promise comforting His disciples, whom He had just been reminding of their weakness, whilst He again directly addresses them, instead of using the third person, as in ver. 6: “*If a man abide not in Me:*”

Ver. 7, 8. “*If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.*”

In the tenderest and most comforting way the Lord illustrates the meaning of this one necessary thing: *abiding in Him*. No less than ten times does He here mention it; and so deeply was it engraven in the heart of the holy John, that in his Epistle all his exhortations to Christians are made to converge to this as their centre. See 1 John ii. 6, 10, 14, 17, 24, 27, 28; iii. 6, 9, 24; iv. 13, 15, 16. If we abide in Him, *His words*—the cause of our being clean—abide in us; and if His words abide in us, because in the obedience of faith we live upon these words (“doing what they command, and loving what they promise”—Augustine), we then bear much fruit, for we may *ask* whatever we will—will; that is, with a disciple’s will, having respect to these words—and it shall be granted us (1 John iii. 22). By a twofold power nourishment is infused into the branch; the vine drives the sap into the branch, and the branch itself, by its minute vessels, sucks it in, penetrating itself wholly therewith. So likewise in the *word*, the sap of life from the true Vine infuses itself into the branches, and with the sucking vessels of *prayer*, which reach away through into the very heart of God and to all the riches of His love, the green branches draw into themselves life.

Is it then hard or is it easy to abide in Christ, when His

gracious *word* offers us everything, and when to our *prayer* everything is promised? To keep His word, and to ask in conformity to His word: this is to abide in Him and to be fruitful. The Lord here holds out the same goal to His disciples' prayer as before, in chap. xiv. 13. The heavenly Husbandman would fain be *glorified* in His beloved Vine and its branches through abundant fruit (Phil. i. 11): then surely with perfect confidence we may pray for this glorification of His name, for the manifestation of His glorious grace in redeemed sinners such as we are, for the spreading abroad the purging and the fruitfulness of the Vine—that Vine which He, for the glory of His name, has transplanted from heaven to earth, in order that, the earth also may be filled with His heavenly grace. It is true that all God's works glorify Him, but the language which began at Pentecost, and which has ever since spoken the wonderful works of God (Acts ii. 11), far surpasses every speech and every language in which heaven and earth declares the glory of God; surpasses it as far as the thanksgiving of the angels at Christmas: "Glory to God in the highest!" surpasses the exulting Alleluia of all the sons of God on the creation morn (Job xxviii. 7); surpasses it as far as the mystery of redemption, which was a subject of wonder to the angels (1 Pet. i. 12); surpasses the manifestation of the divine almightiness in the creation of the world. In thee, O Christian man! in *thee* does the Almighty God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, desire to be glorified, as in the master-piece of His love: and canst thou withhold from Him, or destroy, the fruits in which He would delight Himself, namely, thy perfection unto eternal Life? No—"Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits" (Cant. iv. 16).

In those branches which abide on the Vine and bear much fruit is the Father glorified, because they are *disciples* of Christ; *i. e.*, they are true disciples who follow Christ, and in this world are even as He—as He who all His whole life through was a fruitful Vine, and with His fruits glorified the Father.

"The foundation of Christianity is to *become* disciples of Christ; the highest point of Christianity is to *be* disciples of Christ." (Bengel.) How consolatory for the eleven and those who are like them, that the foundation and the highest point of Christianity involve just the same elements!

Ver. 9, 10. "*As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.*"

Here the Lord names the true evangelical purport of those words of His, which were to abide in His disciples, the true element of life in the Vine and in the branches, viz., *love*—the love with which *the Father has from all eternity loved the Son and the Son the Father*; the love with which the incarnate Saviour *loved* us even to the end, that in return we might love Him, and in Him, one another. Behold, what kind of love Christ has shown to us! He has loved us even as He—in the beginning and also in the flesh—has been loved by the Father! See chap. x. 15. The eternal love existing between the Father and the Son we found expressed most vividly in those passages which declare that both are *one*, and that each is in the other (chap. x. 30, xiv. 10). After the manner of this love has Christ loved us: He gave up Himself by entering into our flesh, and through the sufferings of death for us He made His glorified life ours also, that we might be in Him and He in us, and that one and the same love of the Heavenly Father might embrace the Son and the Son's members, the Vine and the branches (chap. xiv. 20; xvii. 23). If now we are to *abide in His love* let us abide in Him, and He in us. His love *to us* is shed abroad in our heart through the Holy Ghost, and quickens and saves us; and this blessed life exhibits itself mightily in us by a joyful love *for Him* in return—the *love of Christ* constrains us *to love Christ* (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). And thus both these two, as the cause and the effect, are contained in *abiding in His love*; namely, that we believingly abide in His love to

us, and that we joyfully abide in our love to Him. Thus, in "the love of God in us," mentioned by St. John (1 John ii. 5, 15; iii. 17) are contained both God's love to us, *through* which we live, and our love to God, *in* which we live. In a word, "Let us love Him (so German Bible), because He first loved us" (1 John iv. 19).

But if Christ has loved us as the Father loved Him, we shall also abide in His love just in the same way as he abides in the Father's love: if we *keep His commandments*, even as *He has kept His Father's commandments*. The Father's commandments to the Son, set forth as our Mediator, are all contained in the one gracious commandment, that He should obtain eternal life for all who were lost (chap. xii. 50); and obediently has Christ kept this His Father's commandment, even to the death of the cross, and thus He abides in the Father's love (chap. x. 17, 18). Christ's commands to us, His redeemed ones, are summed up in the one evangelical commandment that we should receive through faith the life which has been obtained for us (chap. xx. 31), in order that it may bring forth in us the fruit of love to Him and love to our brethren (1 John iii. 23); and if with the obedience of faith we joyfully keep this His commandment, then we abide in His love (chap. xiv. 15, 21).

Chrysostom sets forth the comfort which is contained in this condescending comparison between our abiding in the love of Christ, and Christ abiding in His Father's love, in these words: "In order to strengthen the disciples against the many difficulties they would meet with in their way, and which are so great that it often appears as if they were entirely forsaken, the Lord says, Behold Me! The Father has given Me a commandment of suffering, and yet He loves Me: now, as I die and yet abide in My Father's love, so ye also need not be alarmed; for it is not suffering that can separate you from My love."

Ver. 11. "*These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*"

In the words of the previous verse ("even as have I kept My

Father's commandments, the Lord has been contemplating His end, which was now at hand, and therefore He continues, "*These things have I spoken unto you;*" thus marking this discourse likewise on the Vine and the branches as a holy legacy of His love. See chap. xiv. 25, and xvi. 33. The innermost kernel of this (ay, and of *all* the farewell discourses upon this text, "Let not your heart be troubled!") is found in the words, "*That My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*"

Christ's heart is a joyful heart even in the deepest suffering; for He abides in His Father's love, and *that* is the source and essence of all joy (ver. 10). This love of the Father continued to be His joy even when, for us, He emptied Himself of the sense of that love. "*My God,*" He cried, and in the word of faith He found joy even when He was experiencing the wrath, which for us He had undertaken, of the God who loves Him. This joy of Jesus Christ should become *our* joy. In *Him* it is full; in *us* it *becomes* full, it grows with our growing faith until it reaches its fulness, when He will satisfy us with the joys of His countenance in heaven. "The joy of the pious is their salvation; with the faith of those who are born again this joy commences, and with the crowning of those who rise again it will reach its fulness." (Augustine.)

The apostles take delight in extolling to believers this gift of their Lord's: "*joy in the Holy Ghost*" (Rom. xiv. 7). What the heathen sought when they greeted one another with their "Rejoice" (χαίρει), this by Christians has been found. Without Christ there is no joy. "It is fitting," says Gregory the Great, "that man should ever find sorrow in himself, since he left the Creator, and sought joy in himself." There can only be joy where there is peace; the eye of Christian peace is Christian joy, and this eye even sorrow does not dim. Where this holy joy, the Comforter's dowry, takes up its abode in the soul and sweetens the life of Christians (Isa. lxi. 10), then true fruits multiply and ripen upon the Vine's branches, and the

Husbandman is glorified. But *all* the fruits are of *one* sweetness, they all taste of the sweetness of love; through all the branches there flows one life-sap, the sap of the Vine, and it is one love which binds the disciples *to the Lord and to one another*.

Ver. 12-14. "*This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*"

Christ's commandments are all summed up in this *one commandment of love* (Gal. vi. 2); and this commandment has the precious, evangelical peculiarity, that it only demands the paying back of that which Christ has already given us: "*as I have loved you.*" Christ's love is the *cause*—our love, the *badge* of our discipleship (chap. xiii. 34, 35). "As from the one root of a tree many branches grow, so from love alone many virtues are born. The branch cannot green with any one single good work, if it is not joined to the root of love. And thus the Lord's commandments are both *many* and *one*; *many*, in respect to the variety of works, and *one*, in respect to the root of love." (Gregory.) In 1 Cor. xiii. St. Paul sounds the panegyric of love; with twice seven virtues he makes love adorn the Christian's heart, just as in drops of rain the sun is reflected in the seven prismatic colours. St. Peter declares that love is the quality which Christians should have *above all things* (1 Pet. iv. 8; James ii. 8), and St. James calls it the *royal law*; but St. John's Epistles overflow with the exhortation to the beloved of the Lord, that they should love one another. St. Jerome tells us that the disciple whom Jesus loved used, when in extreme old age, to have himself borne into the assembly of the brethren, in order that he might repeat again and again—being now too weak to add more—"Little children, love one another!" And on being asked why he always repeated this one word, he answered: "Because this is the Lord's command, and when this is done nothing more is required." Ay, nothing more,

indeed ! for when this one is fulfilled, we have put on the bond of *perfectness* (Col. iii. 14).

The essence of love has appeared in all its perfectness in Christ, for “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” From whom, indeed, should we learn what love is, but from Him ? All human love flows from Christ’s living source of love ; it is a small portion of love out of His fulness of love ; and its highest exhibition, the laying down of one’s life for one’s brethren, is the fruit borne by branches of *the vine* ; for “hereby *perceive* we *love* (so runs the Greek as well as Luther’s translation), because He lay down His life for us, and *we* ought (are bound) to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John iii. 16).

For His *friends* ! I know of no word that ought to shame us more. Lazarus, whom Jesus loved, was His *friend* ; sinners, whom Jesus loves and for whom He dies—these are His *friends*, His preventing love makes us, who otherwise would have remained enemies (Rom. v. 8-10), friends to his Saviour’s heart ; it draws us into the blessed bond of friendship with Him, wherein we delight to *do that which He commands us*—viz., to *love with His love*. For as the proverb says : Love maketh love, and friendship maketh friendship ! Alas ! why is it that we so often find it so hard to practise pure, self-denying love, except that the friendship of Jesus seems to us doubtful, or, at any rate, not above all things precious ? To His friends to love is pure joy. “Well, that is a sweet and charming word, that He calls them *His friends*. Hitherto, He says, ye have been enemies ; but on this account are ye friends, because I hold you for friends, not because ye do me much good, as the world calls friends, but as being those to whom I myself do good. For such friends I die, who have never done me good, only I have loved them and made them my friends. In short, ye have not made me your friends ; but from being enemies, ye have now become so, ye who were by nature the Devil’s friends. And now ye are and shall continue to be my friends, if only ye keep this

my one command, for love to me and for good to yourselves. My body and my life have I given to you, ye are dear friends to me, earned and purchased by my blood ; through me ye shall possess everything, be rich and noble gentlemen ; only take heed that ye abide in my friendship, and do not become enemies again, nor so live that none can say ye are my friends." (Luther.)

I know a dear sister in Christ who was first led to know her Saviour's love by this saying: "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*" She was standing by the sick bed of her only child, her heart wrung by his bitter moans. Alas, my child ! she exclaimed, how gladly would I suffer in thy stead, and lay down my life for thee ! Her mother's love prompted her in her anguish to offer a prayer to the Lord, from whom she had hitherto been wandering very far, and she brought out the long-forgotten Bible. The first passage upon which her eye fell was this very one in St. John xv. 13, and it pleased the Lord to give that afflicted mother's heart so strong an impression of the great love wherewith He has loved "*His friends*"—greater than any mother's love—that from this hour she dates the commencement of her friendship with the Friend of sinners.

The Saviour dwells tenderly upon this name—*friends*, which He has given His disciples. In order to invite them to a joyful fulfilment of the *duty* which as *friends* they owed Him, He reminds them of the friend's *rights* which He had imparted to them :

Ver. 15. "*Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*"

Thus He cites them as themselves witnesses of the true, unreserved friendship to which He had admitted them. His expression, "*Henceforth I call you no longer servants,*" reminds us of the "*from henceforth*" (chap. xiv. 7), in which He before

so condescendingly described to them the entrance into their hearts of the Spirit of Truth, as if it was a present reality. Hitherto the disciples had stood to their Lord in the relation of a *servant*, who *knows not what his lord does*; as a servant, in sheer obedience, had St. Peter been forced to present his feet to the Lord, to be washed by Him (chap. xiii. 7); as servants, had all the disciples followed Him during the whole of His course, from Jordan to the scene of His suffering; for neither in Gethsemane nor on Golgotha did they know what He was doing. But *henceforth* the Comforter, putting them in remembrance, was to make clear to them, to be their light and their life, *all things* that the only-begotten Son had *heard* for them *from the Father*, and in the gospel had made known to them (chap. xiv. 26)—for He does not say that we should know all things, as how many stones there are at the bottom of the sea, or how many stars in the heavens; but all things that God thinks concerning us, and all God's heart towards us—and henceforth, therefore, they should know themselves as the *friends* of Jesus Christ, as true children of Abraham, “that friend of God” from whom “the Lord could not hide the things which He would do” (Gen. xviii. 17).

True, the disciples, as well as all Christians, continue to be *servants* of Christ; but not in the sense in which the *servant* excludes the *friend*, but in that sense in which the *servant* is the *chosen friend* as well. There are three grounds especially on which Christians—the *free servants* of Christ, who gladly obey their Lord—are in Scripture *no longer* called *servants*; they are no longer servants, but *children*, because they have been redeemed from the bondage of the law, and have received the Spirit of adoption; they are no longer servants, but *heirs*, because they abide for ever in the house with the Son, as joint heirs with Him; they are no longer servants, but friends, being admitted into the secrets of their Lord, through the unction of the Holy Ghost. “They who know not what their Lord does, are servants. They, then, who are in ignorance concerning the

mind of God towards them, these have a servile spirit. But they who are acquainted with God's fatherly heart are children and friends." (Gerhard.)

By the condescending announcement to them of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the Lord was already granting to His disciples a friend's privileges; and to the full enjoyment of those privileges they were to be introduced by the Comforter. Yet in the midst of the most blessed enjoyment of their privileges, the friends of Jesus must ever remember, in all humility, that it is of *free grace* that they were given to them; therefore He thus continues:

Ver. 16. "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.*"

"Mind you dismiss all vain glory, as if ye had chosen me, but depend wholly on me! Allow that I first choose you, and that thus (not you but) I may have the glory that I have merited it for you through my blood and death." (Luther.) The discourse returns again to the figure of the vine and the branches. Just as the branches do not exist before the vine, but the vine before the branches, so it was not the disciples who first chose the Lord, but the Lord who first chose the disciples to be His friends: the free, sovereign, gracious gift of His friendship is alone the ground and soil upon which they grow and thrive, and bring forth fruit which remains; because the Father "hears the Son always," and they are the praying friends of the Son, who therefore are also heard. As all that made Israel to be Israel rested wholly upon the free, sovereign choice and preventing election of the "God of Glory" (Acts vii. 2), so it is also with Christ and His Church. The love between Christ and His disciples is not a love between friends who before were on a footing of equality, whose mutual giving and receiving, in loving and being loved, originates equally in both; rather it stands thus, that Christ receives from His disciples that which His love has previously

given them; for they have nothing to give that they have not received (1 John iv. 10; 1 Cor. iv. 7). The daughter of Zion, the *friend* of the heavenly Solomon, receives all her beauty and worthiness entirely from the *Friend* who has chosen her. Her spikenard sends forth the sweet odour which she has drunk in from the gaze of the King (Cant. i. 12):

“If *Thou* had’st not first clung to me,
I ne’er had gone to seek for thee!”

The Scripture doctrine of *Election* (Isa. xliii. 21; Eph. i. 4; Rom. viii. 28-30)—a doctrine as humbling as it is full of comfort, shines out with remarkable clearness in this discourse on the vine and the branches, for it opposes deviation from the truth in one direction as well as in the other; neither, on the one hand, must we seek the cause of the salvation of those who abide as branches on the Vine anywhere but in the free compassion of divine love, neither, on the other, must we seek for the cause of the rejection of unfruitful branches anywhere but in their not abiding in the Vine, in which they are required to abide, because, in the strength which is graciously held out to them, they *can* do so. The Lord’s electing love has *ordained* or *set* His disciples (as the vine *sets* branches, or as the husbandman—for Christ is this as well as His Father—*sets* the new vine-sprigs which have sprung from the root of the vine), that they may “take root downward and bear fruit upward.” *To go forth*, to spread abroad, to increase in joyous growth, as branches fresh and vigorous with life do, and *to bring forth fruit*, such as being *their* fruit may *remain*: this it is to which the friends of Jesus Christ are ordained; the apostles, that they bring forth the fruits of apostles; the whole company of Christians, that they may bring forth the fruits of Christians, such as may remain for them for the eternal harvest, and may follow them into eternal rest (Gal. vi. 8, Rom. vi. 22, 1 Thes. ii. 19, 20, Rev. xiv. 13). But then will the saints eagerly throw the crown of their fruit at the feet of that Lord in whose name they went forth, *praying and labouring*, and to all eternity will thank the Father for so richly granting all the

petitions which, as friends of His dear Son, and as taught by the Holy Ghost, they have ever brought before His throne.

Would'st thou fain *bring forth fruit*? Then *pray*! Dost thou want that wisdom which will enable thee to bear fruit in thy particular station? Then pray, and it shall be given thee (James i. 5); for all that it is wanting to thee, pray, pleading before the Father the precious promises which Christ here holds out to us. That is especially why they are there. Prayer in the name of Jesus—it is repeated in all the three chapters of this farewell discourse—this is the beginning, the middle, and the end of what we have to do in order to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter i. 10); for we as branches are directed to be mere recipients, and every one that *asketh receiveth*. (Matt. vii. 8.)

The Lord, in conclusion, sums up again all the fruit for which He has ordained His branches in this one—

Ver. 17. "*These things I command you, that ye love one another.*"

"Thus He closes up the word and commandment that He has placed before them, by means of which Christianity, wherever it is to remain, must be held together in union; and which is the sign by which we may know who are true believers and Christians." (Luther.) Brotherly love it is that keeps all the branches of the true Vine whole and perfect: where there is a rent in this bond, there everything gets wormeaten, and perishes. (Col. iii. 14). May He help us to abide in *His* love, and thus to love the *brethren*, and so shall we be neither "unworking Christians," nor "unbelieving workers," but real friends of Jesus, true branches in the true Vine.

The Holy Cross.

CHAPTER XV. 18; XVI. 4.

O Holy Spirit, do Thou bring to our remembrance the words of the Lord Jesus, which we are now about to read, that we may not be offended at the holy Cross, which is the sign of all true Christians. Amen.

THE friends and disciples of Jesus Christ have two marks of their friendship and discipleship: the first is, that they *love one another*; the second, that they *are hated of the world*. Concerning the first the Lord has already spoken, and He is now about to speak of the second. "Of more worth than a hundred thousand florins, ay, not to be compared with gold, is this text, in which He Himself pronounces this judgment concerning us, that we are not of the world, and that this is the sign of our not being of the world, that the world hates us. This is a lofty trust and a noble consolation when we are hated for His sake, that we are thereby already pronounced and declared to be chosen by Him and separated from the world." (Luther.) Just as the love of Christ is the source from whence brotherly love proceeds, so the world's hatred towards Christians is because they abide in their Lord's love. For so little as the world can *hate* those who are of the world (chap. vii. 7), so little can it *love* those who are chosen out from the world to be the friends of Jesus. This truth, now that the Lord was going from them, the disciples were henceforth in the most painful manner to experience. But, let not your heart be troubled! It *must* be

so, and it will be so, as long as the world remains the world, and Christians remain Christians; as long as the race of Cains and the race of Abels are living on the earth. But what the blind world does cursing, God turns for his children into unmixed blessing. For the Husbandman purges the branches of the Vine by means of the world's hatred, while however He allows not the world to tear from the Vine even the smallest twig: for as they hated the Vine and yet were forced to leave It unharmed, ay, and even to forward through their bitter hatred Its glorious increase, so surely shall the beloved branches likewise abide, in spite of the world's cruel hatred and violence. But what do the disciples of Christ give in return for the world's hatred? even the same return that Christ gave. Under the guidance of that Spirit of testimony who, by virtue of His eternal Godhead, is never to be overcome, they testify concerning the love which God in Christ has towards the poor, lost world; they strive, through the word of their testimony, to win over into being friends of the Saviour those who are His enemies; and this they persevere in doing, even though, in the performance of this their glorious calling, they have to become outcasts, or even to suffer death. Thus they go forth and bear fruit.

Ver. 18, 19. "*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would lose his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*"

When it comes to pass, as it must, that *the world hates you*, then recollect what *ye know*, that *it hated Me before it hated you*. I am Love, and the world hates Me; abide in My love, and know that the hatred of the world is aimed at Me in you. Because the world is reprov'd by the Light which shines upon it in Christ, therefore those hate Him who continue to be of the world, and who will not be delivered from their wickedness. Along this path of light, which the lovers of darkness hate, walk the children of light, following the true Light. The

enmity of the world brings Christians to a living consciousness of their union with Christ; they feel that they are branches of the Vine and members of the Head; and as often as their weak flesh shrinks back from shame and scorn—from being outcasts, or suffering death—a voice within them cries :

O craven soldier! stand'st thou there,
And see'st thy Captain onward go?

Where I am, the Lord says, there must also My servant be. “Blush, the member of a Head crowned with thorns, to be itself caressed by the world! Blush, the soldier to live without a wound and well-off at home, whilst his King was wounded in the camp! Blush, the servant not to accept the world's hatred, whilst his Master despised the shame and endured the cross!” (Gerhard.)

As our union with Christ is shown by our hatred of the world, so likewise is our separation from the world; for the selfish world *loves its own*. “He who reviles my Saviour must also revile me,” said the martyr Ignatius. Oh, that the world's flattering love may arouse every worldly Christian from his idle dream of being a believer! The world loves *its own*, that which *belongs to it*; therefore if it loves *thee*, it sees in thee *its own*, and claims thee as its *property*; at least, the sharp-sighted love of the world still detects a good bit of world in thee (1 John iv. 5). Be rebuked and put to shame by the world, if it loves thee, and spue out *whatever* it finds in thee to love; rest not until thy being *chosen out of the world*, through His love who is not of the world, is sealed unto thee, by the estrangement of the world (1 Pet. iv. 4), conformably to what is here said: “THEREFORE *the world hateth you!*” It is impossible to abide in Christ's love and, at the same time, to be loved by the world; for the most distinguishing quality of the world is just this—enmity against Christ and His kingdom. “Amongst themselves they are otherwise such friends as dogs and cats are; but in *that* which relates to Christ, they all hate with one mind.” (Luther.) If we only go right to the bottom, we shall

perceive with horror, that whatever there may be in us that is not displeasing to the world, belongs to the old nature which is not yet given up to Christ (James iv. 4). But if we are *counted worthy* to endure as *Christians* the hatred of the world (Acts v. 41), let us never forget that we also were sometime of the world, children of wrath by nature, *even as others*; and that *we* have not torn *ourselves* away from the world, but that our merciful God and Saviour has *chosen us out of the world*, gathered us out to be His family: *that* will keep us gentle and tender, lowly and humble, and ever watchful against that peril to the soul which consists in transferring to *our* cross the glory which belongs alone to the cross of Christ (Gal. vi. 14).

Ver. 20. "*Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also.*"

This saying, which the disciples never were to forget, they had already heard three times from the Lord's own lips. See Matt. x. 24; Luke vi. 40; John xiii. 16. In Matthew it stands: It is *enough* for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. It is from that passage that we gather most clearly the full, comforting meaning which this utterance bears in its present connexion. The servants of Christ who are hated by the world may not be greater than their Lord Christ, whom the world has hated before them; for as no man has greater love than He, so no man has greater patience in greater sufferings; and it is enough for His disciples to be honoured with the shame which their Master experienced, and in the fellowship of His sufferings to be made partakers of His glory (1 Pet. iv. 13, 14). The servants of the persecuted Master are not *spared* the pain of persecution, neither is the blessing of persecution *refused* them: "*If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;*" if indeed ye do abide in Me and I in you, so that *in you* the world beholds *Me*. And therefore, "Why persecutest thou *Me*?" Christ asks the per-

secutor of His people. So long as the Church militant shall last, St. Paul's rule will hold good: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus *must suffer persecution*;" and woe to the Church when it ever loses the heavenly character of being *hated* and *persecuted*, until the time come that the world shall lie at her feet, bowing down before the sudden appearing of her glory. True, Christians who are silent concerning Christ,—who are ashamed of Him who has chosen them,—the world, to be sure, would leave unmolested—would perhaps even admire their "noble nature;" but *witnesses*, confessors of Christ's *word*, the world cannot abide. "*If they have kept My word*"—the disciples had seen in actual fact how admirably the world had managed to keep the Lord's word—"they will keep yours also." They who preach *the word of Christ*, the foolish word of the cross, without colouring of worldly wisdom and without fleshly tenderness, must not reckon upon the approval of the multitude, or upon worldly honours; and all who, instead of bearing the cross, the sign of Christ's disciples, are greeted by the world with healths in flowing bumpers—such persons are already judged. For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Ver. 21. "*But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me.*"

A course of tribulation lay before the disciples, and they might think the persecution which they were sure to endure as something strange (1 Pet. iv. 12); for they surely were charged with a joyful message to the world in the blessed name of Jesus Christ; but they would no longer consider strange anything that the world's hatred should inflict upon them, as soon as they reflected that men of the world, who are alienated from God, *know not Him* who has *sent* His Son into the world, to deliver it from the dominion of the prince of the world. They knew Him not (although with their mouth they made their boast of the true God), when *Christ* spoke to them in the name of the true Father (chap. vii. 28); neither will they know Him,

when, in the name of Christ, *the disciples* shall say: Be ye reconciled with God! But this ignorance of theirs is by no means an evil to be commiserated, but damning sin. "The more blessed they are who *suffer* all these things for the name of Jesus, the more miserable are they who, for His name's sake, *do* all these things." (Augustine.)

Ver. 22. "*If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin.*"

If the Saviour had not *come*, and had not in His word graciously revealed to the world the loving motive of His coming (chap. viii. 26), they had *not* had *sin*; that is, not *the* sin which makes all other sin especially sinful and inexorable,—*the sin of not believing on Him*. No man shall die in his sins, except him who, *through unbelief*, thrusts from him the forgiveness of sin, which, in the name of Jesus, is offered to him (chap. ix. 41). *This is THE real sin, which contains all others*. For if the word of Christ were received, every sin would be forgiven and remitted; but since men will not receive it, this constitutes a sin which is not to be forgiven." (Luther.) In its nearest signification, this passage applies to the people of Israel, to whom the Saviour came as to His own, and His own received Him not; but at the last day it will be seen, that to all nations the kingdom of God has come nigh, and that amongst all the eternally lost there will not be found one who *can bring forward any cloke for his sin*.

No cloke, the Lord emphatically says. It is man's proper inheritance to seek for a cloke and an excuse when enticed by sin, and to throw the guilt of it off from himself upon God (Gen. iii. 12); but the true and righteous Judge, who is jealous for the honour of His tender love, knows how to cut off from the man who is lost, not only every real *excuse*, but even every *cloke* or pretence; and the voice of Jesus Christ: "*I have told thee!*" (chap. xii. 48) will, in the judgment, wring from those who have despised the word of life which has come to all, the unwilling confession, "Yes, we *would not*" (See Matt. xxiii. 37). And

fearful is it to fall into the hands of the living God, when we have thrust from us the hands of love which He has stretched out to us in Christ.

Ver. 23. "*He that hateth Me hateth My Father also.*"

Out of Christ there is no God : he that hateth Me hateth the one living God, the Father of Jesus Christ ; and whatever else it may be which he pretends to love, it is not God, but an idol. Justin Martyr in his first Apology, says : " Why, then, are *Christians* alone persecuted, whilst all other nations and sects enjoy perfect freedom in the exercise of their religions, even the most senseless and immoral? *It is a warfare of fallen spirits against God Himself, and against truth ;* and persecution itself, so far from obscuring, or throwing any suspicion on the Christian faith, is just its brightest justification." And thus it is even now : men hate Christ and Christians, because they love not the lightning-flash of eternity, the flaming gaze of the holy living God, which beams forth into the world's darkness from the eye of every Christian man. In order to unfold Israel's unbelief in all its inexorable enormity, the Lord thus further heightens the tone of His discourse :—

Ver. 24. "*If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin ; but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father.*"

The Father's *word*, which Christ *spoke*, He confirmed by His Father's *works*, which He *did*,—works in which He revealed His glory as the only-begotten Son of the Father, and the love-imbued power of which had so often drawn from the people the acknowledgment of their praise. See chap. vii. 31, ix. 32 ; Mark vii. 37 ; Luke vii. 16. But the world, which is averse to the love of God, joins together things which, to souls susceptible of truth, are separated by poles asunder, viz., *seeing* and *hating* ! Yet, what could the Lord have done more to His vineyard that He had not done in it ? The disciples knew their Master's untiring labour of love to His people from experience ; and the more horrible that they now perceived to be the guilt of those who returned such love with hatred, the more anxiously did they

look forward to the course which lay before them ; for this, they saw, was to be in their Master's footsteps, striving, through the midst of the world's hatred and persecution, after the comfort which true witnesses can feel: "*I am free from the blood of all men*" (Acts xx. 26). But let not your heart be troubled! It is no strange thing, for which God is not prepared, this hatred of the world against His kingdom ; rather even persecutors are constrained, in spite of themselves, to glorify the Son of God, by fulfilling that which is written concerning Him :—

Ver. 25. "*But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law: they hated Me without a cause.*"

In *their* Law (from the language of the vainglorious Jews does the Lord call the Scriptures the Law), of which, in their blindness, they boasted, their judgment already stood written. We find the passage, both in Ps. xxxv. 19, and in Ps. lxix. 4. Both Psalms belong to those in which "the features which in individual just men, under suffering, are seen *scattered*, are *gathered up* into the image of one great martyr. The particular person represented under this image appeared in Christ ; for in Him is present *that* Just One, from whose fulness of righteousness King David, and all pious men of the Old Testament, draw their several measures of righteousness ; and therefore against Him was poured out, even to the dregs, that hatred of the world, of which the suffering saints under the old dispensation had each his several taste. Hence Psalm lxix. is often especially quoted as being fulfilled in Christ (chap. ii. 17 compared with Rom. xv. 3 ; chap. xix. 28 ; Matt. xxiii. 38 ; Acts i. 20 ; Rom. xi. 9, 10). In Christ, and in Him alone, may we also venture to take to ourselves this saying : "*They hate Me without a cause.*" There is the true foundation upon which the "holy cross" stands. Being hated by the world for His name's sake, we experience, as sharers in His cross, the consolation which has been expressed by the ancient Church, in the words : "In the case of Christians, it is not *wickedness* that is condemned, but their *name*."

Christ none could charge with a sin *without a cause*; according to the liar's fancy it was, that the lying world, hardened against the truth, hated Him (compare chap. viii. 44 with Ps. lxxix. 15). Sinful men, whom Christ calls His friends, may, it is true, be charged with many sins ; but the world hates them not as being sinners, but as the objects of divine grace ; it hates them, not for that which they have in common with the world, but for that which separates them from the world ; it hates them, not *with*, but *without*, a cause. "For there is no blasphemy, no wickedness, which is so hateful to the world as the name of Christ and His Gospel. It is all on account of the ³word ; it is that which causes such anger and hatred ; if it were not for that, its anger and hatred would not be half so bitter or dangerous personally, either to Him or to us. But now, because we preach His word, we must not alone be despised, but hated as well ; and yet in such wise that they have no cause to hate us, but, on the contrary, great and unmixed cause to love us, to serve us, and to thank us. Therefore, when thou dost feel and experience this hatred, patiently submit to it. For there is the devil at work, striving to tear us away from Christ ; and it is the way of our flesh, too, not to care for Him, but, on the contrary, even hate Him,—Him to whom we ought surely to do all honour, and bear Him on our hands, and find all our heart's joy and comfort in Him." (Luther.)

Whenever these predictions of the Lord Jesus are fulfilled concerning the world's hatred against the confessors of His name, then is the time to remember the promise, that joined with our weakness there is an Almighty Advocate who will conduct Christ's own cause, and maintain it triumphantly against the whole world. Both of these results,—their being, on the one hand, undismayed in the Lord, and, on the other, full of pity for the world which hates them,—are brought to pass in the bearers of the cross who have been chosen to endure the world's hatred, by the Comforter coming unto them as the Spirit of testimony. The apostles in the highest degree were in need of

this Advocate; and to them the high and holy comfort contained in the next verse immediately applies.

Ver. 26. "*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me.*"

If *He* is the one who is really the witness, the poor disciples might indeed be of good heart. And the Lord attributes three properties to the blessed Comforter, which could not fail to be (or at least, to become) peculiarly precious to the troubled disciples.

First He says: "Whom I will send unto you from the Father." He had before said in chap. xiv. 26: "Whom My Father will send *in My name*," obtained through My mediation and prayers. But the glorified Christ is concerned in the sending of the Holy Ghost into the hearts of His believers, not only as High Priest but as King. He *sends* the Comforter from the Father; the Father "has given to the Son to have the Spirit of life in Himself" (chap. v. 26; Acts ii. 33). What a faithful Comforter, what a tender bosom-friend must then the Spirit be, being, as He is, the Saviour's own delegate!

Secondly, the Lord again repeats the Comforter's glorious name: *the Spirit of Truth*; and thereby promises to the disciples the same holy armour in which He has Himself encountered the hatred of the great liar and his children, and overcome it (chap. viii. 46). Into the truth which Christ Himself essentially is will the Spirit of Truth (chap. xiv. 6) lead the disciples of Christ (chap. xvi. 13); and in this "strong tower" they will be sheltered from all the arrows of the wicked one.

Thirdly, the Lord invites His disciples to cherish a joyful confidence in the *true Godhead* of that Spirit of Truth, whom, as Comforter, He is about to send to them from the Father, by adding: "*Which proceedeth from the Father.*" We may trust unhesitatingly to the guidance and to the testimony of the Holy Ghost; for He, as well as the only-begotten Son, testifies what He has seen (chap. iii. 11). As the Lord Jesus Christ is the

faithful Announcer of the mysteries of God, because from eternity His abode as only-begotten Son has been in the Father's bosom: so, in like manner, is the Holy Ghost *therefore* the trustworthy witness of heavenly things, because *He proceeds from the Father*. The ray which proceeds from the sun is of the same nature as the sun; and the stream has the same water as the spring from whence it proceeds: so likewise is the Holy Ghost of the same *essence* with the Father from whom He proceeds; that is, He is very God, and, as such, qualified to reveal the deep things of the Godhead, which to Him have been from eternity known (1 Cor. ii. 11).

But when He comes as the Comforter, He testifies *of Christ* to the confusion of the Christ-hating world: "He shall testify *of Me*." But in testifying of the Son, He glorifies in the hearts of believers the Father's name likewise; thus proving Himself to be the eternal Spirit both of the Father and of the Son, whose essence, because proceeding *from the Father*, proceeds *from the Son* likewise. The attribute, which in the passage we are now considering, is ascribed to the personal Spirit of God, viz., that He proceeds from the Father, *includes* rather than *excludes* His proceeding from the Son (for, says Christ: "All things that the Father hath are Mine"), just as His being sent by the Son includes His being sent by the Father also. The Greek Church, in intended fidelity to the teaching of Scripture, has done amiss in this, that she has assailed the essential oneness of the Father and the Son in the eternal emission of their living breath, and has withdrawn that breath from Him who showed that it was His when He breathed on the disciples and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

The Holy Ghost *shall* testify of Me, the Lord says. He *had*, it is true, already testified of Christ, from the first Gospel that sounded in the ears of the first sinners down to the last prophet, John the Baptist; and indeed the Holy Scripture of the Old Testament is one testimony of the Spirit concerning Him who was to come (1 Pet. i. 11, 12; 2 Pet. i. 21); but He had not as

yet testified of Christ *in the way* in which He was now about to testify of Him, for in that particular way in which He henceforth, after Jesus Christ should be glorified, would be existing and operative, He hitherto had not been existing (chap. vii. 39). It was on Whitsunday that this glorious, new-testament testimony of the Spirit of Truth first commenced, when the wonderful works of God in Christ were written in the apostles' hearts, and when the old-testament Scriptures were so unsealed to them, that with new eyes St. Peter read in the Prophet Joel and in the Psalms of David what with new tongue he proclaimed to the world. And the Pentecostal Spirit is an abiding Comforter: in the congregation of believers He still dwells, in order by the seal of His testimony to make them certain of that eternal life to which in Christ they are called (Eph. i. 13 ; 2 Cor. i. 22).

The following verse plainly indicates the distinction between the Holy Spirit and the spirit of man (while at the same time showing that this spirit of man is the vehicle through which the Holy Spirit testifies), also showing the substance of His testimony.

Ver. 27. "*And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning.*"

Thus not through suggestions from heaven, communicated directly to man in general, nor yet by visibly appearing, will the Holy Ghost testify, but in the hearts and through the mouth *of the Apostles* ("and in fact *ye* shall bear witness" is the exact reading of the text); and it is no new thing before unheard of that He will announce, but He will testify what the apostles have from the beginning seen and heard with Christ, teaching and bringing to their remembrance, and thus opening to them the word of life to a new and more complete understanding of the same (chap. xiv. 26). There are therefore two parts to the *apostolic testimony*; first, the eye and ear witness of human witnesses (Acts i. 21); secondly, the witness of the Divine Advocate, the Holy Ghost, leading them into a lively realisation of the truth to which they testify. The holy apostles' witness is consequently what we may venture to call, a God-man kind of witness, because therein is united in one the witness of God the

Holy Ghost, and the witness of men before chosen by Christ for that end—"we are witnesses, and so is also *the Holy Ghost*" (Acts v. 32); "the Spirit and the bride *say*: Come" (Rev. xxii. 17). "When the apostles give their human testimony to Jesus, the Holy Ghost watches over their discourse, guards them from error, purifies, elevates, strengthens their memory, and imparts fitting words; and whilst each apostle speaks in his own peculiar way, he is yet wholly imbued with the Spirit. Thus, we recognise one and the same word to be at the same time both human and divine; appearing as one, we yet acknowledge it to be two joined together, and the GOD-MAN'S twofold nature in one Person is mirrored as a twofold, at once divine and human, witness in one and the same word. All that the apostles speak is at the same time divine and human." (Löhe.)

This apostolic witness, through whose twofold drawing the Lord longs to bring the world unto Himself, is for us present in the written word of the apostles, and in the oral preaching which comes out of that word. It is the duty and privilege of *every* Christian to take to himself most especially the words, "*Ye also shall bear witness*;" but the accompanying words, which relate to the apostles alone, "*because ye have been with me from the beginning*," refer all those who, through the apostle's word, believe on Christ, to this apostolic word as to the fountain chamber of all truth, from which they have to draw what they again must pour forth. Compare especially the urgent exhortations to abide in the saving doctrine of the apostles with which St. John's epistles, and those of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus enforce opposition to hereticks. To the Apostle Paul, this disqualification of not having, like the first apostles, "been with Christ from the beginning" during their three years of apprenticeship, was supplied through the extraordinary manner of his conversion, and during the time of his three years' sojourn in the deserts of Arabia, and in Damascus, and by direct instruction from the Lord (Gal. i. 17); so that he also was ordained to be a "witness of what he had seen and heard," and he emphatically

affirms that he saw the risen Lord even as the other apostles had (1 Cor. xv. 8). Therefore, so far is it from being true that the example of the Apostle Paul should cause us to waver in making the qualification of being an eye-and-ear-witness necessary for apostleship, it rather substantiates the requirement; and if we only had this one passage, in St. John xv. 27, to which to refer against the recently developed enthusiasm of Irvingism, yet would that alone be sufficient to discover their apostolic office to be a mere human device. They feel strongly the evils of Christendom, and in the desire which they feel for their cure, above all, in their ardent longing for the Lord's second coming, they put many to the blush; but the medicine which they proffer has not been prescribed by the physician above; the "light" with which they promise to dispel all "shadows" is a will-o'-the-wisp which will not serve to light the bride on the way to the bridegroom. God be praised, there is balm in Gilead—and the Physician, too, is there; we have no need to fetch Him over from England! If we will continue faithful to the old true apostles, and to their infallible word, until we shall read their names on the foundations of the New Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 14), the Holy Ghost will make of us also witnesses who know and can most solemnly affirm that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners.

Chap. xvi. 1.—"*These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*"

These things—respecting the world's hatred and their defence against it in the spirit of testimony—the Lord told his disciples beforehand, that they might not, in having to suffer persecution, be offended either at the seeming triumph of the world's power, or at the seeming subjection of Christ's kingdom. Powerless seems to be the knighthood to which Christians are called by the spirit of witness, when opposed to the carnal weapons of the world's hatred; but as surely as that the Spirit which is their witnessing Paraclete proceeds from the Almighty Father, so surely will the cause of Christ which they serve triumph over

all the hatred and violence of the benighted world. Hitherto, the Lord had only in a general way spoken of hatred and persecution; but, in order that the disciples might not remain in any doubt concerning the persecutions which awaited them, He now adds, speaking expressly to them:

Ver. 2. "*They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*"

So it came to pass, as is abundantly told us in the Acts of the Apostles, but the apostles were not "offended." At first, *excommunication*, the being thrust out of the assembly of God's covenanted people (see the beginnings of this above, ch. ix. 22, xii. 42), fell upon them—though they in truth were the true people of Israel; so that, in the sight of God, he it was who was excommunicated who despised their witness, and who would not join himself to them. Church history tells of more than one excommunication to which true members of the Christian Church have been subjected by those who take the Christian name all to themselves and hate the Christian character. Martin Luther is also of the blessed number of these excommunicated ones—men who are followed into exile by the apostolic Church, together with the apostolic word. "Though they excommunicated me, yet good luck go with me! For such excommunication is but an empty name, like all their other boasting and bustle, and in this very place Christ has forewarned me of it, and exhorted me not to care for it. Ay, thou sayest, but for all that, the Christian Church has excommunicated thee? Not so; *that* she has ceased to be. For on that account, though she boasts of the name, yet she is not the Church; and if they excommunicate me, who have nothing but the empty name, what care I? The true Christian Church will assuredly not persecute or excommunicate us, but would gladly and heartily accept and ratify our teaching, and hold us for dear brethren. But though, besides, the Pope also excommunicate us and condemn us to hell, we can joyfully bear and even scorn it; we wait for the

Judge from Heaven, our Lord and Saviour, that He may judge between us, that He may assign and give to us the name of the true Church, which is now denied us ; and openly exhibit them as the devil's bride, separated and thrust out for ever from the kingdom of Christ" (Luther). You see, dear brethren, there happens nothing new under the sun !

But the persecutors of Christ's witnesses will not only drive them out of their "Church," but even from life in this world ; both amongst Jews and Gentiles men will consider it a *God's service* to *kill* Christians as "the offscouring" (or, as the Greek perhaps means, *the scape-sacrifice*) of all nations. (1 Cor. iv. 13). What a blessed band of martyrs have these words of the Lord sealed ! Thousands of Christians have been put to death, as sheep appointed to be slain, by the heathen in honour of their false gods ; and following in the footsteps of the Jews, who disguised their hatred of the true God, the Father of Jesus Christ, under the mask of holy zeal, the Romish Church has pursued the same course, to add to the proto-martyr, St. Stephen, a large company of associated martyrs.

What really is it which makes Christians so unbearable to the world, and hateful even unto death ? The heathen Romans raised images to every conceivable false god, and placed them peaceably side by side ; it was the Christian's God alone that they persecuted with fire and sword. The world, at the present day, leaves in peace every possible religious party ; it is only the witnessing Church that it cannot abide. And otherwise it cannot be. The Church witnesses to the salvation which is in Christ, and gives the lie to whatever promises salvation in any other name ; it is impossible that she should be endured by the world, because she cannot endure that the world should be unconquered, but (after her Lord's example, Isa. lxii. 1), moved with heavenly intolerance, cries out—

"Rest be there none, until this earthy wall,
Subdued by Jesus' Love, before Him fall!"

The persecutors of Christians have manifold ways to gloss over

their hatred, which is born of unbelief; but the Lord lays bare its real source :

Ver. 3. "*And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.*"

"In opposition to so many false pretexts which the world alleges for its open or insidious hatred, the Lord Jesus brings forward always the chief and truest reason, in order that no Christian may weary himself by the vain endeavour, by the use of any arts, to ward off the world's hatred." (Rieger.) This sentence at the same time points out the posture of mind which Christians under persecution should cherish, both towards God and towards their persecutors. Towards God let our souls turn in requiescent submission, magnifying His grace that He should so closely unite Himself to us, that whoever persecutes *us* knows not *Him*; but towards our persecutors let our heart turn with compassionate love—with love which hates in them that which makes them persecutors, and would fain through its prayers impart to them. "They know not what they do"—this forbearing word, after our Saviour's example, we also will speak; and from the man who, before the scales fell from his eyes, himself persecuted the Church of God, we will learn patience and forbearance; will say with him, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat" (1 Cor. iv. 12).

Ver 4. "*But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things said I not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*"

"*I told you of them!*" As in St. Luke x. 3, the "*I send you!*" gives to the lambs a safe-conduct in the very midst of wolves, so here in this "*I*"—I your Saviour and leader—there is contained a strong, mighty consolation, a mighty "Let not your heart be troubled!" May only the Comforter freshen in our memory this word of the Lord of lords, whenever we are called upon to suffer! then shall we be bold and fearless, and

bear our part in the sufferings appointed to the Church of God without disquiet and without offence. The "keeping of the word of His patience" will bring us through. "Let us ever remember who it is that has given us this warning. So sweet and lovely is Jesus' name, that the thought of it is enough to dispel the bitterness of all our persecutions. For this name reminds us of all the benefits which, with a most large and liberal hand, Christ has bestowed upon us ; His own example, when He was pleased to share with us one and the same lot in this world—His commandment, that we should possess our souls in patience—His promise, that He will stand at our side in the conflict and bring it to a successful end—but, above all, the righteousness of our cause, because it is for the name of Christ that we have to suffer all this." (Gerhard.) Oh, it is a precious thing to know that men of peace *can* have no peace with the world, but *must* be at variance and strife with it. It was just this, the *necessity* of persecution, that the Lord had not told His disciples *at the beginning*. He had, indeed, as early as the Sermon on the Mount, and often afterwards, warned them that they would have to suffer persecution for the gospel's sake ; but now, in this farewell discourse, He for the first time fully discloses to them the cause of the God-estranged world's hatred towards His person and towards the confessors of His name, while He at the same time promises to them the Advocate, who henceforth should secure to them that which hitherto they had obtained from His own visible presence. So long as Jesus was with His disciples, He "gathered them under His" own protecting "wings," and the world's hatred vented itself wholly upon Him (as He says, "If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way"). As an umbrella had the Lord covered His disciples ; it *must* now rain hatred in the world incessantly ; and when the visible shelter was withdrawn, the rain would fall upon the disciples. From the time that the Lord Jesus Christ sat down on the throne of His majesty in the Heavens, the old Serpent has sought out the vulnerable heel of the exalted Son of Man in His members upon

earth; and it was necessary that the disciples should be prepared to feel and to endure the serpent's sting. During the first wedded year, even under the Law, the bridegroom was exempt from going to the battle (Deut. xx. 7); but this time was with them now coming to an end, and that of conflict and suffering was about to commence. Upon the like path, which leads from wedding raptures to the distresses of war, the Lord is wont to guide all His true disciples, and blessed they who are not offended at being thus guided.

The Twofold Office of the Comforter.

CHAPTER XVI. 5-15.

O Holy Spirit, that which Thou hast received from the Father and the Son do Thou make known to us, and by Thy convincing and teaching grace, glorify the name of Jesus in our hearts to the honour of God the Father. Amen.

“*I was with you.*” This word of their departing Master made the disciples most painfully sensible of the nearness of their separation ; and so absorbed were they in their sorrow, that they could not see how full of joy was this departure for Him whom yet they so tenderly loved (ch. xiv. 28) ; yes, they were altogether thinking, not of the heavenly abode *whither* He was going, but only of the earthly place which He was *leaving* ; and thus they sorrowed as orphans, refusing to be comforted. Therefore the blessed Lord does not just yet end His discourse, but goes on to unfold to them still further the import of His cheering word, “Let not your heart be troubled!” Well He sees that in their sadness they have not yet been able fully to comprehend the sweet name of *Comforter*, or to receive it into their hearts ; therefore, He will fain imprint it deep upon their minds ; and endeavouring to draw them away from sorrow at His departure hence to joy in the precious fruit of His arrival in Heaven, He describes the Comforter’s work and office—first, in respect to the *world*, and secondly, in respect to the *Church* of believers. Both the one and the other, the Comforter’s office of *convincing* as well as that of *teaching*, is to Christ’s witnesses

a fountain of heavenly blessing. Indeed it is *they* through whose mouth the Holy Ghost convinces the world, in order to gather from out of the world into the company of disciples whatever *can* be convinced ; and, by the same Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, they are likewise qualified to discharge this glorious vocation ; for He comes to guide them into perfect truth, and in them to glorify Jesus Christ, who is Himself *the* Truth. Pardoned, justified sinners, who have themselves escaped from judgment—these are the instruments through which the Comforter works ; it is through them that He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

Verily, it *is* expedient for us that Jesus should go away, that from the bosom of the Father He may send this Comforter down into a reconciled world !

Ver. 5, 6. "*But now I go my way to Him that sent Me, and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*"

Thomas had certainly asked before, and Peter, too, even before that (chap. xiv. 5, xiii. 36) ; but that had not been an asking, such as sounds well in the Master's ear. *Now*, after He has been speaking to them so comfortably concerning His departure, and was just stepping forth upon that path which led to His Father, finishing the Father's work upon earth,—*now* they all remain dumb ! What He had been saying to them, instead of opening their mouth, had closed it ; for their troubled heart was entirely filled with sorrow at His leaving them, when it ought to have been filled with a joyous curiosity to enquire into the blessing which should follow from His going to His Father. And this gave the Lord pain. So greatly does His love desire that we should go to Him with our doubts ! so willingly does He answer every soul who desires to learn ! Let us never allow sorrow so entirely to take possession of our heart as to thrust out from it even the question,—Lord, whither goest thou ? Whither goest thou *with me* ? What is it that in this distress thou wilt that I should receive from thee, and should give to thee ? Show me thy way, O Lord,

that I may walk in thy truth ! And, “as it fared with the disciples, concerning the Lord’s sermon on His departure, so with many is it now wont to fare with sermons touching the blessing of the cross. They weep because they feel the smart of the cross ; but they fail to catch the divine topics of consolation, and will not be aroused to ask to what end the cross is good for them.” (Gerhard). Yet, even though our hearts may be so oppressed that we cannot ask, yet Jesus is willing to reply ; as here, though unasked, He graciously answers the disciples :—

Ver. 7. “*Nevertheless I tell you the truth : it is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart I will send Him unto you.*”

“Thus, before they begin to ask, He himself prevents them, with the answer to their thoughts : Ah, my dear disciples, reflect not how sad it naturally is for you that I am parting from you, but think how expedient it is for you. Let us talk for a while concerning this matter what I mean thereby. What you ought to ask, and to be concerned to know is, *wherefore* I am going away, and *in what it will advantage you.*” (Luther.)

What the Lord told them was the *truth* ; their sorrowful hearts concealed from them the truth ; and it was necessary that the Lord’s word should draw it forth into their view. Thus, to everything that our despondency (or our self-will) falsely suggests, the precious word of God brings forward the convincing answer : “*Nevertheless I tell you the truth ;*” and well for us if, instead of trusting our own lying thoughts, we confide in God’s infallible word. The truth which the Lord has to tell the troubled disciples is this : “*It is expedient for you that I go away.*” Not until it was expedient for His people did He go away ; not until then came the hour of the power of darkness ; and even then, only one hour was granted to it, after which the bright light was soon to follow.

The twofold expression—to *go away*, and to *go thither*—which the Lord makes use of, serves to bring out the expediency of His departure with reference to the Comforter, who should come to

us in a clear light.* If Jesus did not go *away*, the Comforter would not come to us ; if we, like the disciples hitherto, had the Saviour with us in the visible form of His assumed weakness, we should not become partakers by faith in the power of the Comforter unto a heavenly life, and an eternal blessedness. As Augustine paraphrases the Lord's words : " It is expedient for you that this form of a servant, which I wear before you, be taken away. True, I shall still continue to dwell amongst you as the incarnate word ; but no longer after the flesh will I fain be beloved by you (see chap. xx. 17, and 2 Cor. v. 16) ; ye yourselves ought not to desire always to remain children, satisfied with this milk. If I were not to withdraw from you this tender food with which I have hitherto nourished you, you would never hunger after the stronger food ; if you continue carnally to hang on to the flesh, you can never become capable of receiving the gift of the Spirit." But that is only half the reason why Jesus' departure is expedient. He adds : "*But if I go thither, I will send Him unto you.*" By going *thither* to the Father—through the suffering of death *entering* into His glory—the Saviour has *obtained* the Comforter ; and, as the glorified Son of Man, and as the perfected Captain of our salvation, He has *received* Him for redeemed sinners, that He may *send* Him into their hearts (Acts ii. 33). In order that we might be able to receive the promised blessing of the Spirit, it was first necessary that Christ should take up, and take away, our curse (Gal. iii. 13, 14). Mount Calvary is the mount of separation between the Old and the New Testament ; and from the hour when the Saviour, lifted up on the cross, uttered the cry, " It is finished !"—which the Father answered by the rending of the veil of the Temple—the way is opened for the promised Comforter to come and dwell with the as yet unperfected members upon earth of the perfected Head in heaven, in all the

* Luther has in each instance rendered *hin-gehen* [to go *thither*]. But in the Greek the general hypagein [*dakin-gehen*, depart] is distributed into the two separate terms,—*apelthein* [*weg-gehen*, go *away*], and *poreuthenai* [*hin-gehen*, go *thither*]. In our English version such a distinction is altogether ignored.—TR.]

fulness of New Testament blessing. "This is the treasure and the blessing which I shall bring to pass, and obtain for you. But as matters now are, it cannot be realized by you; I must first make arrangements through which it shall come to pass; I must obtain it at the price of My death. Therefore dwell not on My going away from you, but upon My coming thither to the Father. And in this thought, instead of the sorrow and sadness which you now feel on account of My going away from you, you will find nothing but comfort, and joy, and life, namely, in the reflection that I am going thither, where I shall receive power from the Father, and be Lord over all, and bestow upon you the Holy Ghost, who will glorify Me in the world; and thus, *through you*, I shall commence and carry on my kingdom, which shall never have an end. Such a marvellous work shall I perform, that before it the Devil and the world must needs be struck with terror and bow before you, and ye shall help much people, and be their salvation; which would behove to remain undone, except I went away and died!" (Luther.)

Ver. 8-11. "*And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged.*"

When the Comforter is come to you, my witnesses, He will *reprove the world*,—the world which hates and persecutes you. He will attack it in the power of God, and it, with all its might, shall be brought to shame. And thus the Lord connects this discourse with chap. xv. 26. The world, so long as it *will* continue world, cannot *receive* the Comforter (chap. xiv. 17); but it can, and it shall, *feel* its mighty nearness, *reproving* it, if perchance it will renounce its worldly character, and become capable of receiving Him as the Comforter.

Let us for a moment consider the coming of the Comforter on the day of Pentecost, in order that we may perceive His *office of reproof* in respect to the world. What the Holy Ghost then put into the mouth of the Apostle Peter to declare, that was the

first fruits of His arrival ; and in this very first discourse He reproves* the world, by *convincing* it, in a manner calculated to excite both deep feeling and shame, of three several things : first, of *sin*, which reached its culminating point in the rejection of the Saviour ; secondly, of *righteousness* which God has set forth in the crucified and risen Christ ; thirdly, of *judgment*, which is victoriously executed on that now conquered Being who had the power of death (Acts ii. 22, &c.) For three thousand souls, this first reproving discourse of the Holy Ghost was a savour unto life ; through the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith they escaped the judgment which they had deserved on account of their sins. This reproving office of the Spirit will last so long as the world endures, and it will show its mighty power through the same apostolic preaching, by which, with its first vigour, it fastened upon the world on this day of the Church's inauguration. It is also God's good and gracious will, that the reproving of the Spirit, and the Spirit's witnesses, should penetrate the hearts of *all*, as it did in the case of those three thousand chosen children of Pentecost, as surely as that Christ has become of *all* sinners the righteousness and triumphant life. But it is not all who are obedient to the Holy Ghost. Those who do *not* now gladly receive His convincing word, He will, nevertheless, convince (Acts ii. 41) ; for He will at the last constrain them to the confession that their condemnation is wholly just, tearing from them every pretext by which they would fain seek to excuse their sin (chap. xv. 22).

After this glance forward at the Comforter's office, operating in the world's threefold conviction, let us now turn to the three several parts in particular.

1. "He will reprove the world of *sin because they believe not on Me.*" The law also has an office by which it convinces and reproves its transgressors that they are sinners ; but the deep fountain of all sin, the peculiar abomination of the worldly

* The exact meaning here of "to reprove," is just that of our colloquial phrase, *to give the lie*.

heart, estranged from and hostile to God, *this* is disclosed by the Holy Ghost, descending from the throne of the exalted Saviour, when He brings home to the mind of sinners the guilt of the *particular sin of unbelief against Jesus Christ* (as indeed the “spiritual law,” even under the old dispensation, teaches that *unbelief* is the source of all sins : for ex. Jer. v. 3). For this end, says St. John, has Christ appeared, that He may take away our sin, and in Him is no sin : oh, see how the world must *love* sin, when it will not believe in Him who is ready to take it away—when it has no desire for fellowship with the sinless Lamb of God ! The world’s love of darkness is shown by its despising the Light which is shining upon it (chap. iii. 19) ; its love to sin by its rejection of the Redeemer from sin. Therefore the world *will* have no Jesus, it *will* have no Abolisher of sin and Procurer of righteousness,—because it loves what Jesus would fain take from it, and loves not what Jesus would fain give it : this is *the one sin* which the Holy Ghost charges upon the sinner’s conscience—on which one account the voice of the law which accuses the sinner of thousands and thousands of sins, but which before the blood of Christ was ready to sink into silence, now inexorably sounds in his ear the sentence of eternal condemnation (chap. viii. 24).

Well, then, let us examine ourselves, whether we have a truly spiritual conviction of sin, that we be not like those foolish people who, as Luther says, “take pains to keep off the trickling stream, but leave unstopped the fountain-head ; who cut off the small offshoot, but who, of the root of the evil tree, take away nothing.” Amongst all the lost ones there will hardly one be found who has not confessed some, perhaps many, of his sins ; but until we yield ourselves to the operation of the Spirit, so as to feel and abhor our sins of unbelief towards the Saviour, and earnestly repent of *that*, until ~~then~~ we have not truly known our sin, or crushed its head.

2. “He will reprove the world of *righteousness*, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more.” The Law also says to

those who are under the Law, that righteousness is God's requirement at their hands; but the Holy Ghost reveals the righteousness as actually present in Jesus Christ, the Holy One and the Just, who, through the suffering of death, has *gone to His Father*, having entered into His glory; and He convinces the world that this righteousness of Christ, which faith has to lay hold of, is alone acceptable and well-pleasing before God. "In few words St. Paul teaches how far Christ's going to the Father is our true justification, when he says in Rom. iv., Christ was *delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*. For going to the Father means, dying and rising again." (Brenz.)

The Holy Ghost acts as a *Reprover* when he holds out before the world the righteousness of Christ; for thereby He chastens it in order that it may let go all its own fancied righteousness; and that is a sore trial, piercing to the very marrow of the old man. Verily, it is a gracious reproving, and one which, to all who will yield themselves to it, serves for salvation, that the Holy Ghost, in the mirror of *Christ's* perfect righteousness, sets before us the nothingness of *our* righteousness, in order that, despairing of our own work, we may flee to the work which Christ has fulfilled for us. "The most reasonable ideas," says Rieger, "which men, even in decent moral society, entertain of righteousness, are declared by the Spirit of God to be inadequate when He calls upon us to seek and to find the only and eternal righteousness in this alone, that He who was made sin for us did not continue to be under this assumed burden, but through resurrection and ascension He has been justified and glorified." But shall the *world* experience such an evangelical reproving of the Holy Ghost as this? Certainly! The apostolic preaching holds forth Christ before all the world, calling it to repent; and those teachers of the present day who would withhold the very essence of the Gospel, viz., Christ our righteousness, from the people, because, they say, it has ceased to utter that cry of distress, "What shall I do to

be saved?" and therefore must learn it again from the Law—those men would do well to take to heart the following passage from the departed Spener: "It is not forbidden, neither is it unwise, when dealing even with the most ungodly of men, to whom I am bound to denounce the wrath of God hanging over him, to declare to him as well the choicest treasures of salvation; and this not in order to lull him to security, as if in his present condition he had to appropriate to himself those treasures, for from such comfort as that I must altogether cut him off; but partly, that by this means I may cause him to see the misery of his sinful state, which deprives him of those choice blessings which otherwise would be his; partly, that by this exhibition of Christ, I may draw him on to desire these blessings, and thereby lead him to repentance."

The righteousness of which the Holy Ghost convinces the sinful world, is grounded on the Saviour's meritorious departure to His Father, by means of which He turned that which is His own possession into a *gift* for redeemed sinners. And this gift is given to those who, though they *see* Him *not*, yet through faith are joined to Him (chap. xiv. 1). Even from the disciples the visible appearance of their blessed Lord was withdrawn, that their faith might be called into exercise, and that thus they might be fitted to invite others also to the exercise of faith—faith, namely, in this, that it is by believing in Christ who has gone to his Father, whom now we see not, that we have righteousness. "Christians must know of no other righteousness by which to stand before God and be pronounced righteous and to obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life, than this going of Christ to His Father; which, as has often been said, means nothing more or less than this, that He has taken upon Himself our sins, and on account of them gave Himself up to be crucified, to be buried and to descend into hell, but that He did not remain under the power of sin, or death, or hell, but has *passed out* of them all through His resurrection and ascension, and is now at the Father's right hand, ruling mightily over

all the creatures of God. This is the going of Christ to the Father which He has given and bestowed upon me. What is there wanting in it, or what fault can'st thou find with it? But thou tellest me thou dost not see nor feel anything thereof! I answer: True, He Himself, when He says, *ye see Me not*, explains and describes this righteousness as being such that I shall not feel, but that I must fasten on this word of Christ by faith. What need should I have of faith if I could see all this present before my eyes, or could be conscious of it and feel it within me?" (Luther.)

3. "He will reprove the world of *judgment*, because the *Prince of this world is judged*." Even the law proclaims to sinners who are found destitute of righteousness before God the judgment of damnation to which they are liable; but the Holy Ghost sets forth this judgment in the case of the Prince of this world, as already executed; for by the triumphant departure of Jesus to His Father he has been thrust out of His principality (chap. xii. 31); and thereby He convinces the world that the power of *their* god has been taken from him, and that the only choice which is left to them is, *either* through faith in Jesus to share in His perfected triumph over the devil, *or* to share in the fate of their own judged and condemned prince. The Church of Jesus Christ, though in the midst of the world yet a conqueror of the world and of the Prince of the world, exhibits this judgment unceasingly before the eyes of the world, through the witness afforded in the simple fact of her own existence. And this conviction, that the Prince of this world is judged, to which the Holy Ghost constrains the world, is indeed a *reproving*. For everything that the natural man lusts after in this world, and that the "blinder of his mind" (2 Cor. iv. 2), represents to him as being glorious enjoyment, when seen in the light of the Spirit, is discovered to be nothing but an empty lie, tinder for the fires of hell. But well for those who, as humble penitents, are willing that all the fashion of the world should be included in the judgment which has been passed upon the Prince of the

world, and who in faith clothe themselves with the might of this redemption wherewith Christ hath freed them from the devil's power. Because the Prince of the world is judged, all who renounce him and surrender themselves to the service of Jesus Christ, shall *not* be judged; but those who abide under the dominion of the devil will have no excuse; for of their own perverse will they continue to be his servants, since for all Christ has vanquished him.

The Gospel of St. John itself is a glorious fulfilment of this declaration that the Comforter should come for a three-fold reproving of the world; for from beginning to end it lays bare the *sin* of not believing in the only-begotten Son of God, extols the *righteousness* of the Holy One and the True, who, as the Lamb of God, is our righteousness, and announces *judgment* as coming upon the prince of this world, which has been accomplished by the departure into heaven of the Son of Man. May we and all other students of St. John, receive grace from the Lord, that from His pure and holy lips we may hear the Comforter speaking, and may, by His reproving, be led to repentance, to faith, and to the earnest endeavour after sanctification. True, He reproves the *world*; but even those chosen out of the world, as yet bear about them that which is reprovably worldly; and the man does not exist who, for one day, could dispense with the Comforter's reproving work. Where this reproving voice is silent, the true Comforter is not speaking, but as the Lord complains in Isa. iii. 12: "O, My people, thy comforters cause thee to err." Those only who humble themselves under the reproving discipline of the one saving Comforter, can enjoy the blessing of His other office,—that by virtue of which he leads believers into all truth.

Vers. 12, 13. "*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come.*"

Well did the Lord know that His poor, sorrowing disciples were not at present able to apprehend and grasp all that is contained in these three things: *sin, righteousness, judgment*, of which, *through them*, the Comforter was to reprove the world; if He had now interpreted these words of His to them, and been pleased to lead them deeper into this mystery of atonement and justification, He would have laid upon them a *burden*, one which would have been too heavy for their understanding to bear. It is in the light of His resurrection and ascension that Jesus will have His crucifixion considered, otherwise it is indeed unendurable. From the throne of the glorified Saviour descends the Comforter, and *guides* the lovers of truth *into the whole truth*, by filling them as the *Spirit of Truth*, and penetrating them more fully from day to day.

In chap. xiv. 26 we have considered this instructing and guiding office of the Comforter, and we saw that all His teaching is faithful "*putting in remembrance*" of the words of Jesus. The whole, the perfect truth had the Lord told His apostles (chap. xv. 15). Not in part had He declared to them the mystery of the kingdom of God, keeping a part of it back; no new things is the Holy Ghost to teach believers; but He will guide them into all truth, so that the doors of truth shall be thrown wide open to them, and the master-key put into their hands wherewith to unlock the treasure of truth which has been entrusted to them. The apostolic life and the apostolic doctrine are the ripe fruits of the Spirit's promised guidance into the whole truth; and in the apostolic writings the Church possesses the divine-human (chap. xv. 27), original record of the whole truth in which the apostles were guided, that by virtue of the clear and perfect light which their witness affords, all believers, to the end of the world, may walk in the same only path of truth. "All that the apostles learnt of the Holy Ghost, they first of all preached with their mouth; but afterwards, at God's command, comprised the same in writing, that it may be the pillar and ground of our faith." (Irenæus.) Thus, not to

the apostles alone does this promise belong, but to all who will submit to be, through the inspired apostolic word, led into the whole truth unto salvation.

What took place in the history of the apostles, finds in a certain degree its counterpart in the history of the Church in general. For as, in the words and deeds of the Lord Jesus, the apostles possessed the whole truth, but yet did not fully understand or master what had been entrusted to them, until gradually led to it by the Spirit of Truth: so, in like manner, in the apostolic word, the Church is already in possession of the whole truth, the full day-light of the Gospel, whilst, however, the Holy Ghost is constantly engaged in the discharge of His office as teacher, and is leading the Church, from time to time, according to her need, into the whole truth.

It is a cheering and an edifying study to trace the footsteps of this holy Guide along the way which the pilgrim, struggling Church, has hitherto travelled. Athanasius, Augustine, Anselm, Luther, Chemnitz, Arnd—these are names which on earth recall to our minds the poet's words:

“For on earth He still is with us,
Through His Spirit and His gifts.”

For by means of these witnesses the Holy Ghost has led the Church, when threatened by false doctrine, forward step by step in the resolute maintenance of the Christian truth concerning the Trinity, concerning sin, concerning the atonement, concerning justification, concerning conversion, concerning sanctification. And in our own time, the Holy Ghost is still present, leading believers more and more perfectly into Scripture truth with respect to the Church;—this is felt by all who hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church, even though we cannot yet point to the human witness in whose mouth the Spirit will concentrate the conception to which, under His guidance, all living members of the Church have to work their way.

All praise be to this faithful Teacher, the Spirit of Truth, who cannot rest in His work, of equipping, strengthening, confirming,

settling, till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. iv. 13). He led the holy Apostles into all truth, and the united, harmonious witness of a *Peter*, a *Paul*, a *John*, and a *James*, works upon men's minds after the manner of the sun, which, one and the same, radiates forth its light in many rays ; or as the twelve precious stones, the foundations of the New Jerusalem, which, though they have each a distinct and separate lustre, yet it is from one light that they all receive it (Rev. xxi. 19, 20). With the same divine power and faithfulness has He, up to this very time, led the eternal, apostolic Church, so that her united confession of the truth, like a river springing up in the mountain of God, and swelling higher and higher (Ezek. xlvi.), flows on through centuries, often, indeed, in a narrow or hidden valley (as, for example, in the *Waldenses*, and the *Bohemian* brethren), but yet never drying up, but ever gathering new strength, with which to fertilize the parched and thirsty ground. When, through the instrumentality of that monk, who lived by faith in the forgiveness of sins, the water of this river flowed into the thirsty soul of *Luther*, what fresh strength it there gathered ! how was the promise again fulfilled, that from the body of believers should flow rivers of living water ! (chap. vii. 38). Cause, indeed, for rejoicing, have the children of the Church, which has her habitation on the banks of this holy stream, and which, therefore, is not *moistened* by single small rivulets of truth, but well watered by the full river of the whole Truth.

Let us, then, with teachable diligence, yield ourselves to the Spirit's guidance, who, if we walk with Him in the word of Scripture, and in the many Scripture-born testimonies of the Church, in her confessions, sermons, prayers, and hymns, will lead us, as with the hand of a tender friend ; certainly will He guide us, step by step, into the whole truth, which has been entrusted to us, according to our need ; our path will go from one degree of brightness to another, until our perception of faith

will be glorified into that of sight, and the Lamb in the midst of the Throne shall feed us, and lead us into living fountains of waters (Rev. vii. 17). For this do we long, and our longing waxes stronger the nearer we approach the end. For the glory which we expect is not to be found upon earth. The Spirit's continual guidance into all truth, which is the Church's encouragement and joy, is not always accompanied, as we might have surmised, by an ever increasing glory to her form. Alas, no! All that we can work our way to in knowledge of the truth may be compared to the supplies of food and ammunition with which a beleaguered city is furnished. The Lord will not, indeed, permit His city to fall until relief shall come at the last day; but 'yet triumphal processions, as was the case in the beginning, we shall now no longer behold. What conquests would Luther have gained, if the men of his time had still been as those of a *Cyprian* or an *Ambrose*? The last times will not be glorious, but "perilous."

Much depends on being able rightly to discern the Holy Ghost, which leads into all truth, and to distinguish Him from all that pretends to Spirit, but which is yet not from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish (James iii. 15). Therefore the Lord distinctly tells us how the Comforter will show Himself to be the Spirit of Truth, and in what way He will perform His office of Teacher: "*For He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak.*" Thus does the "other Comforter" (chap. xiv. 16) prove Himself to be of like origin with the Son of God, whose representative He is. Just as the Son, being joined to the Father in unity of person, can say and do *nothing of Himself*, because He does not, like the creature, possess a will of His own, separate from the Godhead: so also the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, speaks not *of Himself*, but only what He has *heard from the Father and the Son*, and therefore nothing but the pure truth of God. "And here comes in the fact, that Scripture calls our Lord Jesus Christ, in His Divine nature, the *Word*, which the Father speaks within and in

Himself, and therefore that it is of true, divine nature, from the Father ; and yet does not fall out of the Father, but abides in Him eternally. Now, then, we see the two distinguishable persons : *He who speaks*, and the *Word* which is spoken ; that is, the Father and the Son. But now there here follows the third, viz., the hearer, both of the Speaker and of the Word spoken. For where there is a speaker and a word, there there is properly also an auditor. But those three things,—to speak, to be spoken, and to hear, are all done within the Divine nature, and abides in it alone, for there no creature is nor can be ; but speaker, and word, and hearer, must be very God, all Three equally eternal, and in one undivided majesty.” (Luther.)

Enthusiasts and teachers of false doctrine have even been wont to make this text—“*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now*”—serve to support their heresy. Even *Augustine* laments the Devil’s abusing it, to be a nest for his brood of lies. The Papists bring it forward as a proof of the insufficiency of Holy Scripture, and of the Divine authority of their traditions. The word, however, which follows, “*He shall not speak of Himself*,” puts to shame every human invention which, without the sanction of, and contrary to the clear word of the Lord Jesus, borne witness to by the apostles, pretends to be Divine truth, taught by the Holy Ghost ; and as *Bengel* strikingly observes, those who have received the Spirit of truth are, above all, disgusted with the traditions of Rome. *I*, the Lord says, I have yet many things to say unto you ; therefore it is from Him, together with the Father, that the Holy Ghost has heard all that He speaks ; and nothing new does He teach, but only the old in a new manner, namely, by putting the apostles in *remembrance* of the written word of the Old Testament, and of the oral word of the Lord Jesus, and by putting the Apostolic Church in *remembrance* of the whole completed Scripture, prophetic and apostolic.

Further, since the Holy Ghost, as very God with the Father and the Son, has been from the beginning the Possessor of all

truth, sharing from all eternity in the Divine purpose, surely He is able also to *show things to come*. And this He did after that the Lamb of God had gained the victory over the prince of this world, and thus had prevailed to open the book in which is written the history of the future wars and conquests of the Church (Rev. v. 1, &c.). Even in the apostles' discourses in the Acts, and here and there in the apostolic Epistles, we see the spirit of prophecy at work; and in the *Revelation* which St. John received when *in the Spirit* (Rev. ii. 10), He has fully performed His office, of showing the whole future of the kingdom of Christ, even to the end. Yet here also the Spirit works in the way of *bringing to remembrance*, by opening the minds of the apostles to understand more clearly the predictions of the Old Testament prophets, as well as those of the Lord Jesus, and by leading them, through the prophecies already fulfilled, to gaze into that which is yet hidden. The spirit of prophecy is none other than the *testimony of Jesus* (Rev. xix. 10). He *speaks* that which He *hears*.

But may we venture to change the *you* to *us*? Does it extend to *us* this promise: "He will show *you* things to come?" Yes, certainly; for to the whole Church belongs the prophecy of the Spirit by means of the Apostles; but without the apostolic word the Spirit neither shows us things present nor to come. The apostolic word is the text of every revelation of things to come which the Spirit from time to time has imparted to the Church; and until the coming of the Lord, that bright and morning star, His bride will breathe a joyful amen to the prayer with which the Spirit answers the word which He has heard uttered by Him that is faithful and true: "Behold, I come quickly!"—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

In conclusion, the Lord points out the one object of the Comforter's twofold office:

Ver. 14, 15. "*He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.*"

The saving substance of *every* thing that the Spirit, as reprover and instructor, shows, is *Christ*. Everthing of which He convinces and reproves the world, and everything that He makes known to believers in His office of guide into all truth, and revealer of the Church's future, has for its single end and aim the glorification of Christ in the world and within the hearts of believer. The Father glorified the Son in heaven, when He exalted Him to the right hand of His Majesty; the Holy Ghost glorifies Him upon earth, by preparing for Him a throne, through the blessed Gospel, in the hearts of redeemed and converted sinners. Hereby is any spirit known to be the instrument of the Holy Ghost, viz., by acknowledging the glory of the Lord Jesus and exalting His praise (1 John iv. 2); but every spirit, the result of whose teaching is to exalt, not Christ, but the flesh—making our nature good by its own natural strength, in contempt of Christ's sufferings and merits—every such spirit is a spirit of error. The “shewing” of the Spirit of Truth has for its joyous object the person and the work of Christ: how could it be otherwise when He is the Spirit of Christ? “*He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.*” From Christ, the Anointed One of God, will the Spirit *receive* what He in turn will impart to those who, through Him, become Christians—that is, anointed ones. As the Lord in the midst of all His discourses places the majestic “*I am,*” so the inexhaustible subject of the “shewing” of the Holy Ghost is Jesus Christ. “What I have told you, He will teach you; *ay, and what I am.*” (Brenz.) And in doing this, He magnifies the name of Jesus as the Lord (1 Cor. xii. 3), to the glory of God the Father; and thus leads all who believe His “shewing” into blessed fellowship with the true God. Of this the Lord consolingly certifies His disciples by adding, “*All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore, said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.*” What the Holy Ghost shall receive out of the divine fulness of the Son of Man after His glorification, to show it to the Church, and what as ever

proceeding from Him, "the fountain which ever flows," He unceasingly *receives* out of what was originally the Son's own : *this* is not *only* the Son's (chap. viii. 16), but the living Father's also ; since the Father it is who has given to the Son to have Life in Himself (chap. v. 26).

In short, it is the Truth of God and the Power of God. "Thus is the circle closed, and all Three, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are drawn together into one Divine Being. For of that same thing of *Mine*, He says, which is also the Father's (viz., that I am only God with Him), the Holy Spirit also receives, both what He is and what He has, and thus He both is and has what I and the Father are and have—the Holy Ghost therefore is also Himself very God, with only this distinction and no other, that He receives His Godhead both from the Father and the Son." (Luther.)

If in this, the Lord's parting discourse, the mystery of the Holy Trinity, which is the root and crown of all God's mysteries, is more clearly set forth than in any other discourse which St. John has preserved, let us remember that this very discourse has for its text, "*Let not your heart be troubled!*" Not for vain and fruitless speculation has this mystery been confided to us, but for our joy and peace in believing ; it is as the *Comforter* that the Holy Ghost leads us to the adoring investigation of it. It belongs not to those of curious appetite, but to those who really hunger ; and he who in faith feeds on it here, is cheered also by the hope of enjoying it in Heavenly Light.

On Melancthon's writing-table there was found after his death a sheet of paper, on which he had written the reasons why he longed for death ; one of these ran thus : "Because then I shall perfectly, and not in part, know the blessed mystery of the most holy Trinity." As a few hours before he had the 14th to the 17th chapters of St. John's Gospel read to him, faith in the word, and the sight of God's face, may, in his heavenward-hastening soul, have met and kissed each other.

Your Sorrow shall be turned into Joy.

CHAPTER XVI. 16-33.

My soul longeth for Thy salvation, I hope in Thy word; Mine eyes long sore for Thy word, saying, When wilt Thou comfort Me? Quicken me, O Lord, after Thy loving-kindness.

THE disciples had now heard what the Comforter was to do, both *in them* and *in the world, through them*. But between the present hour and the blessed time of Easter and Pentecost which awaited them, there lay a path of suffering, along which they must pass, in order that thereby they might duly be prepared to receive the Comforter and His gifts of peace. Just as the Lord's *departure* was requisite for the *coming* of the Comforter, so was this *sorrowing* of the disciples necessary in order to fit them for the *reception* of the Comforter. None other but this way of *sorrow* leads to *perfect fulness of joy*. In beginning again to speak of this way through sorrow to joy, ending as He had begun, the Lord is immediately addressing Himself to the troubled hearts of His beloved disciples, who in "a little while" were to be seized with those travailing pangs which end in a happy birth; but He is also thinking of His whole future Church, whose way through this world, under the guidance of the Comforter, has been represented to us in the verses we have lately been considering. For the experience of the first disciples from Good Friday to the Day of Pentecost, shadows forth the life of all succeeding disciples: in the commencement,

in the progress, and in the issue of the Christian's life, the "holy vicissitude" (as the ancient Nitsch calls it) of the word holds good: "*Your sorrow shall be turned into joy;*" for the end and aim of all a Christian's guidance, especially of all his *prayers*, is surely this, "*that our joy may be full*"—namely, by means of the perfect glorification of Jesus within us, through the Spirit, to the honour of God the Father. The real Jubilate ("to be joyful") is a child born of tears.

Ver. 16. "*A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father.*"

The not seeing is the cause of sorrow; the seeing, of joy. But it is a precious thought that behind the *little while* of sorrowful not seeing which soon passes away, there lies a future of joyful sight which will never pass away (ver. 22). We have already, in chap. xiv. 3, and 18, 19, learnt the meaning of that *seeing again* and *coming again*, with the hope of which the Lord in this farewell discourse comforts His disciples. Our Lord's coming and seeing on the day of *Pentecost* forms the centre; for this, His coming and seeing at *Easter* was the preparation; its joy is perfected at the *last day*. And in the same way may we also understand the Lord's words here. The seeing which Jesus promises to His disciples (and to all Christians) is grounded on this, that His leaving them is not so much a going *away*, as a going *to the Father*: "*Because—He says—I go unto the Father.*" If in reading this discourse of the Lord's, we have rightly understood the everlastingly abounding virtue of His departure to the Father, we can no longer be in doubt as to the reason why this His *departure* is said to be the very cause of that seeing of Jesus which will be vouchsafed to believers, as it also (xiv. 12) is said to be the cause of the *greater works* of believers. If Jesus did not go *to the Father*, and did not enter into the Father's glory and greatness (chap. xiv. 28), the Comforter could not glorify Him as the risen Prince of Life—as Him who should remain with His disciples in the word and sacrament for ever, until He shall come again in outward mani-

festation, "in like manner as the disciples saw Him ascend into heaven." Whereas now, with eyes enlightened by the Spirit, we behold His glory; like Stephen, we gaze into heaven, opened to our view, by virtue of the departure thither of our great High Priest.

Ver. 17, 18. "*Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me: and, because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while? we cannot tell what He saith.*"

The Lord's reproof (ver. 5, 6) had so far roused the disciples from their sorrow that they had been attentively listening to His words, and longed to understand their meaning. Yet before asking *Him*, they said *amongst themselves*: "*What is this that He saith unto us?*" Philip would ask Andrew, and Peter would turn enquiringly to John,—each one ascribing to the other a better understanding than he himself had of the dark "parable" (ver. 29). But all concurred in the same sad conclusion: "*We cannot tell what He saith.*" In three respects His discourse is unintelligible to them: first, they know not what "seeing" it is that shall follow the "not seeing;" secondly, they ponder in vain over that strange: *Because*—"because I go unto the Father"—not being able to realise the glorious consequences of His departure; and, thirdly, they end by bringing forward *this* as being especially obscure—the rapid interchange between "not seeing" and "seeing,"—the *little while* is to them perfectly mysterious. St. John describes thus circumstantially the weakness at that time of the disciples (his own as well), in order to show how transcendently has been fulfilled the promise of the Comforter, who should guide them into all truth.

Ver. 19. "*Now Jesus knew—perceived with joy—that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me?*"

The Lord repeats the words which seem so strange to them,

and St. John once more writes them down: how long it is that we have to study them! We know indeed now what Christ meant by the words (which stand seven times repeated): "A little while;" but when, even as disciples of Christ, we experience the disciples' sorrow of "not seeing," its weeping and its lamenting, when the Lord hides His face from us and makes us feel our misery, then are we ready to exclaim with the holy Bernhard: "O, thou little, little while, how long, how long thou art!"—or to join in that more ancient sigh of David's: "Lord, *how long?*" which so often wells up out of his troubled heart (Psa. vi. 4; xiii. 2, 3; lxxxix. 47). If we will arrive at the true Jubilate we must have patience.

With His holy "Verily, verily," which ever seeks to make a way to the heart of man, darkened by earthly shadows, for the entrance of heavenly truth, the Lord now confirms and explains His former words.

Ver. 20. "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*"

Ye,—on this word there lies a stress which at the outset is full of comfort. As *Jesus' disciples*, as God's Church, they would have to weep and lament, whilst the world, the foe of Jesus, would triumphantly rejoice: already in this antithesis the comfort lies concealed, that the disciples' sorrow would only last a little while, and would issue in joy; whilst the world's joy would in a little while be turned into unmingled lamentation and woe (Psa. xl. 16, 17). The same thing which causes the world to rejoice, is the source of sorrow to the children of God; but it is a sorrow which is fruitful and divine. The world rejoiced when Christ hung on the cross; while to the disciples, the sight of that cross was a sword in their breast; "that they must let go all the dear affectionate thoughts which they had entertained of Christ, whilst the devil was thrusting into their hearts such sad, oppressive thoughts—thoughts which

were very death and hell: Where is now that Christ of yours in whom ye trusted?" (Luther.)

If our heart, as the disciples' hearts were, is turned wholly and without reserve towards Christ, we shall feel a pang of sorrow run through us, as sharp as any death-pang, whenever the devil, the world, and sin, seem to us to triumph over Jesus and His cause, whether *in our own hearts*, or *before our eyes* with others; and the more bitter and inconsolable will our sorrow be, in proportion as our poor, still sinful heart clings to what is seen, to the creature and its hollow, deceitful comfort; but every tear that is thus shed, whilst the world laughs, is "good seed," which will bring forth a harvest of joy; it is as water which it is the Lord's gracious purpose to change into the wine of joy—and He will show forth His glory. "Thou hast turned for me my heaviness into dancing;" thus was it and thus is it still with Zion, whilst the world's mourning contains nothing but death, and the world's boisterous mirth—which even now is nothing but howling in God's ears—will be changed into the lamentations of hell.

In order to show more plainly that true disciples'-joy is the fruit of true disciples'-sorrow, the sweet kernel of the former being already contained within the bitter rind of the latter, the Lord adds the following simile, taken from the prophets (see especially Isa. xxvi. 17-20), which must have been sufficiently familiar to the disciples.

Ver. 21, 22. *"A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."*

Who is here meant by the woman travailing in anguish? Clearly, *the company of the disciples*; for the Lord, we see, says: "Ye now also, like the travailing woman, have sorrow." And who is meant by the child of joy which is born? Clearly, the

Lord Jesus; for He says: "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." Just as one and the same child, when it has now come to the birth, causes pain to the mother, and when (as *man*, the masterpiece of the Creator) it is born into the world, causes the mother to forget all her anguish, and fills her with joy: so in like manner, one and the same Jesus, when becoming His Church's perfected Saviour, by dying on the cross and being laid in the grave, is the cause of His Church's sorrow; and when He breaks forth from the grave as the glorified Prince of Life, and ascends into heaven, and takes up His abode in the hearts of His believers, that He may afterwards receive them to Himself in heaven—then He is the cause of their never-ending joy. When the time came that the sword awoke against God's Shepherd, it pierced likewise the soul of His mother Mary, and for the second time she endured maternal pangs; until on Easter morning her Son was born to her the second time. And during those forty hours, all those whom Jesus had once called His mother (Matt. xii. 49), because they had received Him in the hearing and believing His word, sorrowed and mourned with His mother; and their anguish, like that of a travailing woman, strove towards the joyful moment when, in the Resurrection, that Son was given to them afresh, that Child was born afresh, who is the joy of heaven and earth.

And how is this word of the Lord, concerning the travailing woman, fulfilled in the case of His Church *now at the present day*, how *at all times*? It is fulfilled in the case of every Christian who experiences the divine joy which springs from faith; it is fulfilled in the case of the Church at large, whenever she follows her Head, by sharing in His crucifixion and resurrection. Or was not the sorrow which the first disciples felt in that hour of travail, already then a sorrow which was of a kind to bring forth *sin* from their innermost heart, and to chastise it, to nail all joy in the creature to the cross of Jesus, and in the grave of Jesus to bury it? Yes, in those forty hours of travail the disciples wept and lamented, "as if there were nothing on earth

but sinners, who godlessly rejoice in their sin, and sinners who, destitute of all help, weep over their sin." (Stier). And dost *thou* see, in the crucified One, *thine own self*? Do the bitter pains of His sacrifice penetrate into thy guilty conscience, so that in His anguish thou feelest what it is to be a curse?—for this is the very marrow of that "fellowship of His sufferings," which St. Paul speaks of in Phil. iii. 10. If so, then, as *thy* Jesus shall He be born *of thee*; with triumphant joy shalt thou experience the "power of His resurrection;" for by means thereof He proves himself to be thy righteousness and peace, so that thou shalt forget the anguish for joy that a man—a man created new in Christ Jesus—is born into the world. Oh, I beseech thee, do question thyself, whether the new creature, which alone avails before God, has really been produced in thee! A mother can be in no doubt as to the son of her body, whether or no she has him, for with anguish did she bear him; and so the believing soul knows of a certainty that it has Christ, for amid pains of travail was He given to her, as a child of sorrow and of joy. "The heavenly Father calls none *Benjamin* (the son of My right hand) who has not previously been called by his mother, the Church, *Benoni* (the son of my sorrow)." (J. Gerhard.)

Then let us daily descend anew into the waters of our Baptism, and then shall both be our daily experience, both a mother's sorrow and a mother's joy, the bitterness of repentance, and the mirth of faith, the fellowship of Jesus Christ's death, and the fellowship of His life. Such experience fits us also to share, as members, in the sorrow of the whole Church, which surely issues in glorious joy; the sorrow of the noble sun-clothed woman, who "pains to be delivered," as often as a fresh hour comes, that the Man-child, who is to "rule all nations with a rod of iron," prepares Himself for the revelation of His glory, and for His coming in the clouds, and for the glorification of his name through His work of quickening and of judging,—until at length "the beginning of the sorrows" of the last time shall be followed by the perfect second birth of the world, with the perfect revela-

tion of the glory of the Son of Man at His second coming, "and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The glorious fruit which should spring from that disciple's sorrow, the Lord describes in the three-fold word,—"*I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*" When the disciples beheld the Risen One, they were, indeed, glad (chap. xx. 20); but yet, at this Easter meeting, the seeing was rather on the Lord's side than on the apostles'!—*I*, He says, will see *you* again. There was something yet wanting to make their joy perfect, for as yet they only gazed at Him timidly, and with fear, lest He should vanish from their sight. When they saw Him ascend into heaven, to His Father and their Father, then, and not till then, did they touch Him as He desires to be touched, with earnest adoring hands (chap. xx. 17): then *their heart rejoiced* with a great, a living joy; and their joy in their ascended Lord was heightened into an inexhaustible power, into an abiding, ruling motive of their life, when the Comforter, the Spirit of joy, came, and in their hearts put His seal upon the word, "*Your joy no man taketh from you.*" Ever since the coming of the Comforter, who shall abide with His Church for ever, on the day of Pentecost, a one continuing day of Pentecost has been going on, nor will it end until the Lord's visible coming again; therefore it is proper for us, with undismayed hearts, to take to ourselves the power of this precious promise, that no man—not the Devil, not the world, not the weakness of the flesh—shall ever take our joy from us (see chap. x. 28), and to give the lie to that spirit of despondency, which would fain throw a doubt upon our joy, and question its title. It is, indeed, true what the Church says in her exposition of the seventh petition of the Lord's Prayer, that this life is a vale of sorrow; but that sorrow our Lord will take from us, and that, too, in a little while, and then our joy no man will take from us. Our sorrow is the remnant of our sins, and of our sinfulness, which Christ has atoned for, and that remnant lessens daily; but our joy is the foretaste of the blessed eternity which

Christ has prepared for us, and that joy progresses onward, waxing daily towards perfection.

“ And then, which is the stronger, even while we wander here, sorrow or joy? Is not the joy from above, is not the sorrow from beneath? Is not that which is from above stronger than which is from beneath? Which of the two may, which will, which should, take place?—the sorrow embitter the joy, or the joy sweeten the sorrow? Without hesitation I say it, *the joy is the stronger!* And every one would concur with me if they fashioned their life more into *conformity with Christ's life*, if they felt more than they do, that this life is *a going away to the Father and the Son*. If life is only judged of according to our success in worldly business, according to the possession of perishable joy, or honour, or property; if we are earthly-minded, then, indeed, sorrow and suffering must be the mightier. But if we do not seek in the world for the aim and object of our life; if we have cast our anchor behind the veil which conceals eternity from us; if we only live for eternal joys, and strive after them alone, then our life takes quite another form—it then becomes a sojourning, a wandering, a pilgrimage; the suffering of life becomes a conflict, only exciting a stronger longing after eternal things; and the diligent care to enter in thither into the eternal rest of the saints, and not to fall short of it, maintains in us a spirit of joyous, unflagging endeavour, even to the grave. Everything depends upon our *living forwards*, upon our seeing our happiness in life eternal, upon our recognising the fact, that to come to the Lord, to behold Him, to be glorified like Him, to be ruled over by Him, and to rule with Him,—that (I say) for *this* we were born, for *this* we live, for *this* we die.” (Löhe).

The joy-day of Christendom, when the Easter-morn shines, and the Pentecost light pours its beams into the heart, is now described by our Lord yet further:

Ver. 23, 24. “ *And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye*

asked nothing in My name : ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

The *Day* of which the Lord here speaks He has already referred to in chap. xiv. 20 ; it is the promised, long-expected (Jer. xxxi. 34) Day of the Holy Ghost, with which being anointed, Christians will know all things (1 John ii. 20, 27), being led into all truth, and therefore needing no longer to *ask*. Philip's petition, " Lord, show us the Father ! " will on that day be graciously fulfilled ; and possessing the joy of beholding God's brightness in the face of Jesus Christ, the children of this day " shall be satisfied with it." The surprise which the disciples exhibited who could not understand the blessedness of this saying, is met by the Lord—here for the last time—with His precious : "*Verily, verily, I say unto you,*" whilst He points out to them the way by which they might securely pass on from this day's glorious *commencement*, when they rejoiced in their risen Lord and in the coming of the Holy Ghost, to the still more glorious *end* of the same day, for which we ourselves wait. And the path thereto is that of *prayer in the Name of Jesus*, in which the Lord for the third time, in this His farewell discourse, calls upon His disciples to tread (chap. xiv. 13, 14 ; xv. 7). The greater our joy is in praying, and the greater our assurance of being heard, the nearer do we come to the goal of perfect joy in which all our asking in prayer will find its answer, and all our requests and supplications be changed into praise and thanksgiving.

What is the meaning of praying the Father in the Name of Jesus ? It means, to pray as a Christian, or as one who, through faith in Jesus Christ, has God for his Father. This includes three points. To pray in the name of Jesus is, first, so to pray that the person of the supplicant shall be represented by Him ; secondly, so to pray that His Spirit shall suggest to the supplicant what he shall pray for ; thirdly, so to pray that His cause and honour shall be the supplicant's principal concern.

For the sake of clearness, let us illustrate these three points by a similitude. A wealthy heir presents thee with a cheque, signed with his name, for a sum of money which thou art to fetch from his father. Without the cheque thou wouldest receive nothing, for the father of the heir knows nothing of thy name; but because he sees written there the name of his son, he presents thee with the whole amount which his son has commissioned thee to receive. In like manner has the Lord Jesus given to His people a cheque of prayer upon the love of His Father, which they must present to Him—a blank page (*charta blanca*) as Spenser says; at the bottom, His holy name stands written; the upper part we ourselves must fill up with our prayers; the Father will honour the draft to the whole amount for the sake of His dear Son; because *whatever* we are minded to ask in the name of Jesus, the Father will give us. The purport of the heir's cheque runs (we will say) thus: "The bearer of this, a condemned debtor, has thrown himself on my mercy, and I have given security for him." Just so for us poor debtors does the Lord Jesus come forward as security, and the Father, who, though He owes us nothing, owes *His dear Son* the whole heavens, when He hears our prayer, hears Jesus Himself through us, praying that the price of His sacrifice might be paid to Himself in us. "Although I am not worthy that my prayer should be heard, yet Christ is, in whose name I make my prayer; and for His sake my poor unworthy prayer *must* be pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God." (Luther.) If we are Christ's, then are we heirs, according to the promise, of the whole kingdom of heaven (Gal. iii. 29). The name of Jesus is the element wherein the praying Christian-heart lives; in this name we have access to the Father; for His Name's sake the Father deigns to know of and accept the petitions of our distress. Just as, under the old dispensation, all who sought God found Him only over the ark of the covenant, so, for us Christians, He is only to be found in the Name of His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Finally, in that cheque is added the exact sum, and the bearer may not ask for either more or less, than is specified in the undersigned name. Even so is it with the Lord Jesus' cheque of prayer. When praying in His name we pray for the things for which He Himself asks, and we pray for nothing else. The application of self-will is silenced, where the clear declaration of *His* will points out to the praying soul its proper way to the Father's heart (1 John v. 14). But if we abide in Him, whatever we ask in accordance with His words abiding in us, has for its object His cause, the kingdom of heaven, and for its aim, His glory, the glory of the Father in the Son; for the Spirit who teaches us to pray in the Name of Jesus, "He shall *glorify* Me," the Lord says. If ever we have a request refused, it is because it does not agree with the one fundamental, all-important prayer: "If it be good!" Yet this master-prayer, even when not expressed, is always implied, in every prayer offered up in the Name of Jesus; and God's answer always brings out into prominence this main request, whilst, at the same time, He forgives the folly which caused us ourselves to cover over this "If it be good!"

The *Lord's Prayer* contains all for which we pray in the Name of Jesus. "True, we may make use of other words; but for nothing else shall we have to pray than is contained in the Lord's Prayer, if we use it aright. Search through the prayers of all the saints, and thou wilt find in them nothing which is not contained in this prayer." (Augustine.) In setting forth the full meaning which is contained in the address, "*Our Father!*" when used in the Name of Jesus, Chrysostom thus writes: "He who says, 'Our Father,' sums up in this word, forgiveness of sins, justification, sanctification, redemption, adoption, inheritance, brotherly fellowship with the only-begotten Son, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost in all their fulness."

Hitherto the disciples had *asked nothing in the Name of Jesus*, not even the petitions in the Lord's Prayer: not because

they *would* not, but because they *could* not; for the Holy Ghost was not given to teach them thus to pray, until Jesus was glorified through the accomplishment of His mediatorial office, and had become to them what He was to become (chap. vii. 39). But now He is given, and, as the Spirit of the glorified Son of Man, cries in the hearts of the Son of Man's brethren, "Abba, Father!" (Gal. iv. 6). The Psalms of David, and all the prayers of the saints who hoped for Christ, now become new in the mouth of the children of the new covenant; for they conclude and seal all their petitions with the words, "Through Christ our Lord;" grounding their Amen on His Amen, and, as a holy priesthood, offering up sacrifices to God in spirit and in truth (1 Pet. ii. 5).

If there be any one who, since the time of Pentecost, has prayed for nothing in the Name of Jesus, such an one has grieved the Holy Ghost and despised the blood of Jesus, through which we have boldness to enter into the Holiest (Heb. x. 19). But they who *ask, receive*; filial intercourse in prayer with their Heavenly Father qualifies them more and more to receive the riches of God in Christ; because they pray in the Name of Jesus, the joy of Jesus will daily increase in them (chap. xv. 11); they go on from joy to joy, until, after the "little while" is passed in which they are in heaviness through manifold temptations, *their joy will be full* on that day when, in the Name of Jesus, they shall receive and enter the places prepared for them in their Father's house, to the joy and glory of their Lord. "At the last day, before all things, this request will be fulfilled. For our joy cannot be full, as Christ here says, until we see God's Name perfectly hallowed, every false doctrine and sect rooted out, every tyrant and persecutor of His kingdom subdued, the desires of the devil and of wicked men crushed, and His will alone done; in short, until bodily wants, hunger, thirst, no more assail, until sin no more oppresses us, until temptation no more weakens our heart, until death no more holds us captive. But this cannot be except in that life

in which pure, perfect joy shall be full, and there shall be not so much as a drop of sadness any more." (Luther.)

Prayer is then the mighty steeds which draw the chariot in which we drive into the gate of joy. Before we proceed, let us hear the eulogy of prayer with which John Gerhard closes his exposition of this word of Christ. He says: "The advantage of prayer is so great that it cannot be expressed. For what the heart is to the living man, that prayer is to the soul; what rest is to the weary, what joy to the mourner, what gold to the needy, what strength to the weak, what the muscles to the body, what the breath and blood to the life—all that, to the troubled soul, is prayer. What the sun is in the sky, that prayer is in a Christian man. Prayer is the *dove* which, when sent out, returns again, bringing with it the olive leaf, namely, peace of heart; prayer is the *golden chain* which God holds fast and lets not go until He blesses; prayer is the strong *wind*, which blows away the locusts of hell; prayer is the *Moses' rod*, which brings forth the water of consolation out of the Rock of Salvation; prayer is *Samson's jaw-bone*, which smites down our enemies; prayer is *David's harp*, before which the evil spirit flees; prayer is *David's shepherd's bag*, which furnishes sling-stones for the destruction of the enemy; prayer is the *key* to Heaven's treasures; the *little bark* which bears us in safety through this deep and stormy sea of life; it is sweet *incense*, precious in God's sight. Prayer enlightens the mind, nourishes confidence and hope, kindles love, increases humility, begets in the suppliant's mind a renunciation of earthly things, and renders strong and lively his desire for things heavenly; prayer produces unspeakable enjoyment, and crowns with supreme power; for even the angels honour the suppliant who, in Jesus' name, calls upon the holy, almighty God."

But if the disciples had immediately begun to pray and receive, would they at once have dismissed their sadness, and at once have entered into the joy which was set before them? No, that was not possible; for truly the day of joy had not

yet come. Neither does their dear Master blame them for still continuing to be sorrowful ; but He comforts them by pointing out to them the difference between the time *hitherto* and the time that was *now coming* :

Ver. 25. "*These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs : but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.*"

From the very first words of our Lord's farewell discourse : "In My Father's house are many mansions," up to the words respecting the travailing woman, the heavenly purport of the discourse is enwrapped in various similes and parables ; ay, even the sweet comfort which is the kernel of the whole discourse : "Let not your heart be troubled, for I go away and come again to you—I will send you the Comforter, and He shall glorify Me—Yet a little while and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father"—though contained in plain, literal expressions, yet sounded to the disciples like a dark parable ; for they could not as yet understand that, through His very departure to the Father, the Saviour would enter into the closest possible fellowship with them, and would bring them to such a sight of His glory as hitherto their eyes had not been opened to behold. As on this account in ver. 12 and 13, He comforted the listeners to His word with the hope of the Holy Ghost, who, by teaching them and putting them in remembrance, would guide them into the whole truth, which before had been too hard for them—so here He opens to them the comforting prospect of a time which was now coming, when He—He Himself, for it is *of His* that the Spirit takes to show it to them (ver. 14)—*should show them plainly of the Father.*

All things that the Risen and Ascended One shows *plainly*, without the veil of parables, to His disciples, from that first word which, on Easter morning, Mary Magdalene heard from His lips and carried to His brethren, to the very last word which the Spirit saith unto the Churches—all are the Son's showing *of the Father* ; *i. e.*, that the Father of Jesus Christ

may be known as the true Father of all who are in Christ and Christ in them—"that ye may know what the Father is, and what My going to the Father is—that I am set at His right hand, and am your Representative and Mediator—that on your account I do all this, that so ye also might come to the Father." (Luther.)

Yes, those who are taught by Christ plainly showing them *of the Father*, do indeed come to the Father; for they pray to the Father in the Name of His dear Son, who Himself is the Way to the Father" (chap. xiv. 6).

Ver. 26, 27. "*At that day ye shall ask in My Name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.*"

That day, the New Testament day of joy, is at once a day of knowledge and a day of prayer. Plainly does the Spirit of Christ show to the children of the new covenant the mystery of God's paternal love; and plainly in return do they pray to the Father in the Name of Jesus Christ. To this filial freedom will the Lord fain allure His disciples when He adds, "*And I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.*" He is now speaking to them of what He would do by opening to sinners the door of heaven through His intercession, and obtaining for them the Comforter with His gifts of peace and joy; a still greater thing He means now to tell them—He tells them, that in His Name, on account of His finished eternal redemption, they would have open and free access to the Father (Rom. v. 2; Eph. iii. 12), and might joyfully, without fear, rest assured of the Father's love: "*for the Father Himself loveth you.*"

"*For the Father himself loveth you.*"—God so loves the world that He gave His only-begotten Son as a propitiation for all—that is His first general love. Again, God so loves all who believe in the name of His Son, whom He has given, that He calls them His children, desires that, with all boldness and assurance, they should pray to Him as beloved children pray to a dear

father ; ay, and tells them that He receives their prayer as if it were the prayer of His dear Son himself—this is the second, particular love. This especial love belongs, not to the world, but to those only to whom Christ says, “The Father himself loveth you, *because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God.*” How should the Father *not* love those who become one with Him in love to the Beloved One ? See chap. xiv. 21, 23. No man shall keep us from going straight to our Father in heaven ; no man shall dig up the foundation of perfect joy which there is for us in the love of God. “But there is one thing to be considered,—thou must receive the two together, and not chop and mar the text, by leaving out the one and letting the other remain. For what He says is this : The Father himself loveth you, because ye have *believed in Me.* For He will not have himself left out of the business, so that they should pray out of Him, and without Him. But if we keep this Mediator in our hearts, and believe that He came from God, and fulfilled the Father’s will, and took away our sin and death, and so on, then may we also ourselves pray. For it is this faith that brings us to the Father, and thus it all goes in His name. Here, then, we are assured that Christ need not first pray for us, for He has got us all by His prayers already, and we can now ourselves, through Christ, also draw near and pray. For we are not in need still of a Christ, who shall pray for us ; but this one Christ is sufficient, *who has already prayed for us, and brought us near.*” (Luther.)

Yet there is a sense in which believers, who have once for all entered into sonship with God, are daily in need of Christ’s intercession, as much as of the daily absolution after the ever-valid Baptism once received. This is the intercession which the great High Priest, immediately afterwards, in chap. xvii., offered to the Father, for the *keeping* and *perfecting* of His apostles, and of His whole Church, and which, to the inexhaustible comfort of His people, He carries on still in heaven (1 John ii. 1, 2)

—ay, not only carries on still, but which only now is really and powerfully effectual.

“Thy intercessions for us now Almighty power sustains;
 Within the perfect Temple’s veil Thy manhood glorious reigns.
 Satan’s accusing voice Thou quell’st in majesty severe,
 While pleads Thy speaking blood, our sins no longer dare appear.”

Every time that, through sin, we slip away (so to speak) from the Father’s loving arms, Christ’s intercession grasps after us, in order to lift us up again to the Father’s embrace ; and in general, all the mighty powers of blessing obtained by His one sacrifice, are, through His ever-continual prayers on our behalf, brought to bear for our good.

The *love* of the disciples to their Lord, though at that time very imperfect, was yet a love without guile. With the weak hands of their faith, however sad and dispiriting His words were to them, they still clung to Him ; and because they held to Him, they loved Him. Therefore again He reaches out His strengthening hand towards His dear “little children,” tenderly raising them to himself, whilst He sums up His whole witness concerning His person and His office in the words,—

Ver. 28. “*I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.*”

Now, on the threshold of the hour of his suffering and glorification, the Lord thus reviews His entire course as the Saviour, down from heaven to the earth, and again from earth to heaven. He *came forth* from God as *from the Father*, with whom He had been from the beginning as the eternal Word, as the only-begotten Son of God, and impelled by the power of love. *He came into the world* as the incarnate Word, as the Divine Son of Man, the Life and Light of the world. *Again He leaves the world*—moved by the same power of love—through suffering and death, and *goes to the Father*, as the exalted head of His redeemed Church, glorified with the glory which He had from eternity with the Father, from whom He came forth (iii. 13 ; vi. 62 ; vii. 5). As Him that descended as well as Him that ascended, the Church confesses Him (Eph. iv. 10), and in this confession

she sums up the whole comfort of her faith. "Threefold is the way through which Christ passed for the salvation of the children of men ; the way of *love*, when, moved by surpassing love, He descended from heaven to earth, and became man ; the way of *obedience*, when, for us, He was obedient to His Father, even to the death of the cross ; the way of *glory*, when, after having accomplished His mission, He ascended into heaven, and returned to His Father." (J. Gerhard).

Ver 29, 30. "*His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now speakest Thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee : by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God.*"

There is, in the words of the disciples, a strange mixture of sadness and joy, of darkness and light. It was, surely, not alone what the Lord, from verse 19, had been saying to them, anticipating the question which they wished to ask Him, that so affected them—it was the whole of His farewell discourse, meeting, as it so consolingly does, the innermost thoughts of their hearts, which constrains them to acknowledge Him as the searcher of hearts, who knoweth all things ; and, accordingly, clinging to Him as to an all-sufficient Comforter, and as if fearing to let Him go, they hasten to make the confession,—"*By this we believe that Thou camest forth from God,*" as if the hour of joy which He had promised to them (ver. 22, 23, 25) were already come. They now already desire to ask Him no more questions ; they feel confident that He knows all that they need to learn without their asking. Therefore, also, they question Him no farther concerning the manner of His departure ; and although they reach not to the joy of being able to say, "We believe that Thou art going to the Father," yet He who spares the smoking flax, with marvellous condescension, stoops to the weakness of His believers. "This is pictured forth for our consolation, that we may know our blessed Lord, and believe that He so loves His disciples who cling to Him that He can very well bear with and take in good part their childishness and weak-

ness, their failings and their folly, that through such maternal tenderness and patience He may keep them by Him, and strengthen them more and more." (Luther).

Ver. 31. "*Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?*"

He does, indeed, know all things. He knows that the disciples *believe* on Him; that *now*, comforted against all terror, their heart clings to Him (xiv. 1); at the same time, He also knows that this *now* would be succeeded by an hour of terror; that, to reach the goal of perfect believing joy, they must first pass through sorrow, in which their yet remaining unbelief would cause them a thousand bitter pains. Yet, as the Saviour's intercession for His Peter proved a rope of deliverance to the fallen man (Luke xxii. 32), so did this gracious word: "*Now ye believe!*" serve as a light to all the disciples in that dark hour, of whose near approach the Saviour now warns them.

Ver. 32. "*Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.*"

Ye do now believe—but behold, the hour is at hand when your faith, in which now you *gather* yourselves around Me, will be found too weak to *keep* you so gathered: you will be *scattered, every man to his own*, to that which for My sake you had forsaken. In using the word *scattered*, the Lord refers to the passage in Zech. xiii. 7; which speaks of the shepherd being smitten and the flock scattered, and which in Matt. xxvi. 31 He literally quotes. True, in that hour of darkness, to the disciples flight was permitted, nay, even by the Lord Himself facilitated (chap. xviii. 8); for neither were they then able to suffer a martyr's death, nor was it their part, nor that of any other human being, to share the atoning sufferings of the Redeemer; but yet their sorrow, while they wept, scattered each one to his own, was mingled with pain for their having so sinfully *forsaken* their beloved Lord; for it was not their feet alone, but their hearts also that fled (Matt. xxvi. 31). But even amid the offence of this dark hour of their dispersion, their faith as His disciples

glimmered on unextinguished even in their very sorrow—a sorrow which separated them from the world (ver. 20)—until on Easter day it burst forth into a clear light of joy.

But it was also another drop in the Saviour's cup of bitterness, that He was *left alone* by His disciples; therefore He comforts His own Self, and says: "*And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.*" Having come forth from the Father and come into the world in order that He might leave the world and go again to the Father, the Lord in every hour of His earthly course was assured as well of His indissoluble Oneness with the Father (chap. viii. 16) as of His Father's delight in the path of obedience which He trod (chap. viii. 29). And even for that hour when He walked through the valley of the shadow of death, and, overwhelmed in suffering, appropriated to Himself the Psalmist's complaint: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" that still holds good which He here says: "*The Father is with Me;*" for He knew it was the Father Himself who (so great was His love to the world) called upon the Son to descend even to the depth of being thus forsaken by God.

We said that in these words the Lord comforts *His own Self*; but He also therewith comforts *His disciples* too. For if when forsaken by all, He was yet *not alone*, but the Father was with Him, then it could not fail but they see Him again as the Vanquisher of Death and of all the world's sorrow. Well is it for that man, who is so rooted in Christ, that when forsaken by all His friends, He yet (as St. Paul did in 2 Tim. iv. 17) can say calmly and fearlessly: I am not alone, but the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ is with me! When David fled from Absalom, he was (as Luther observes on Psa. iii.) "lonely indeed and forsaken by people even in his own feeling, but before God and in spirit, he was surrounded by a mighty host, and not lonely or forsaken; as in John xvi. 32, Christ says to His disciples: Behold, the hour cometh, &c."—We remember the comfort which John Huss in his lonely prison drew from this passage.

The Church of Christ forsaken and hated by the world (Isa. lx. 15) has this for her blessed watchword, and it is one which will surely make itself good till all sorrow is at an end.

Ver. 33. "*These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*"

For the benefit of His disciples who now believe, as well as for that of His whole Church which shall believe unto the end—the Lord sums up in these words all that He has been saying to His disciples during these parting hours. "Thus is the 'good night' said and the hand shaken. But very forcibly does He conclude with that around which His whole discourse has turned." (Luther.) Those who have *tribulation in the world* shall have *peace in Him*, a peace which makes us be of *good cheer* in the midst of trouble, for it is grounded in *Him who has overcome the world*. It is the peace of Shiloh (the Prince of peace), who as the Lamb of God and the Lion of the tribe of Judah has overcome (Gen. xlix. 9, 10), and now rules for ever in His Kingdom of peace (Isa. ix. 6, 7; Rev. v. 5); the peace of the heavenly Solomon (Peaceable), which the Shulamite extols as the crown of her felicity: "Then was I in His eyes as one that found peace" (Cant. viii. 10). In this *peace*, which the Lord bequeaths to His disciples as *His* peace (chap. xiv. 27), is contained the whole fulness of the Christian's life: the man who possesses this peace brings forth fruit in love, and he has fulness of joy. "It is peace in Christ on which the whole Christian life rests. This peace will have no end in time, but is itself the end and aim of all our holy doing and striving. That we may have peace in Him we receive His Holy Sacraments; for this we are instructed in His wondrous words and deeds; for this we receive the pledge of His Spirit; for this we believe on Him, and hope in Him, and, as far as we may, kindle ourselves with His love; through this peace we are comforted under and delivered out of every trouble; by virtue of this peace we endure every sorrow, in order that by and by, free from all sorrow, we may in this peace rule gloriously." (Augustine.)

These things has the Lord spoken for this end—that we may have peace in Him. His *word* brings us peace. “This is what no power or might upon earth can effect. Therefore we should draw forth and make our own this comfort. My rest and my peace lies nowhere but only in what my Lord Jesus Christ says. We should say with David: *Great peace have they who love His word*. God only grant that *the word* may abide in our hearts, though there go therewith danger or loss to body or life, to goods or blood.” (Luther). If only His words abide in us, there is buried within us the seed of peace which the Comforter causes to spring up, though we may yet meet with such “scattering abroad” as the Saviour speaks of, and have to walk in sorrow. It cannot but be so: the man who desires to have peace in Christ must accept also the other part of the Christian’s lot—*tribulation in the world*, for the world *hates* and *persecutes* the children of peace, and will fain force them either to despair or to deny their Lord. If the world, in which there is tribulation, were merely outside of us, we should not, even when “weeping and lamenting,” be in such very bitter sorrow; but there are still within us remains of worldliness, and therefore we have *tribulation* which threatens to swallow up our *peace*. Yet, let not your heart be troubled! Peace must triumph over tribulation. Firm does our Lord’s word stand, that the sorrow of His believers shall not end in death, but shall bring forth the joyful fruit of life; and answered shall be our prayer: “By Thine agony and bloody sweat, good Lord, deliver us!” as surely as He, our Lord Jesus Christ, passed out of His anguish, endured for us, into the joys of triumph, whilst He cries out to us: “*Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world!*”

“*I have overcome the world.*” Now, in His victory we feel “how knightly He has fought for us,” and the world has no longer the power to terrify us by its tribulation, because we know that though its condemned Prince, through ourselves, has something *in us*, yet in that Christ in whom we have peace, He has nothing (chap. xiv. 30). We live, but now no longer

we, it is *Christ* that lives in us who believe (Gal. ii. 20); in Him we have already overcome both the wicked one and the wicked world as well (1 John ii. 13; v. 4). "The victory is won, Christ says, danger and anxiety are passed! We have not first to struggle and fight, it is all done already. The world, the devil, and death are smitten and slain; heaven, righteousness, and life are conquerors. Christ has achieved it all, has simply given victory to all who hear it and believe. Our present sufferings and struggles are no real conflict, but only a prize, or a part of the glory of this victory." (Luther). Deep in the soul of St. John sank these comfortable words of Him who had overcome the world. That they *overcome*, he extols in his Epistle as the blessed lot of the children of God (1 John ii. 13; iv. 4; v. 4, 5). And is not the entire Book of Revelation a repetition in large of the same word: "*Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!*" What is the whole book but the Lord's word: "*Weep not,*" addressed to the Church suffering tribulation in the world, and *weeping much* (Rev. v. 4).

Christ's High-Priestly Prayer.

CHAPTER XVII.

O Thou great High Priest, give us understanding, that we may know Thee in Thy word, and that out of the fulness of eternal life which is opened in Thee, we may receive grace and truth and joy and glory. Amen.

WITH the words, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," the Lord closed His farewell discourse to His disciples. Yet His holy lips were not yet shut. To the fulness of consolation, which in this discourse He has bequeathed to His Church, His love would yet add another jewel; and He *spoke aloud* the emotions which in this hour, while interceding before His Father, moved His High-Priestly heart; whilst by His prayers He brought down the blessing of His conquest from the Father upon His disciples. Then did He reveal His glory, and the disciples saw it. When he was on the holy mount, His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light, and a voice came to them from heaven, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; but here His soul doth shine as the sun, and His speech beams forth as a still majestic light. For aloft to heaven ascends the voice of prayer from the only-begotten Son, who, in His brethren's flesh, overcomes the world, and goes to the Father, that He may bestow upon them the glory which the Father has given to Him.

When the Comforter brought this prayer to St. John's remem-

brance, and led him into its surpassing grace and truth, the loving disciple had a precious foretaste of the joy of that day when we shall no longer ask anything of the Lord Jesus (chap. xvi. 23). The Church, for whom the Head and High Priest offered this prayer of eternal power and efficacy, has ever regarded it as the most precious jewel which the treasure of Holy Scripture contains. She has been wont to refresh herself by it, as of all the streams of living water the most abundant. *Melancthon*, whose last lecture, shortly before his death, was on this passage, thus extols its glory: "There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered up by the Son of God Himself." *Spener* had it read aloud to him three times on his deathbed—"shewing thereby (says his biographer *Canstein*) how especially he loved this chapter, though he never would preach on it, declaring that he did not understand it, and that the perfect understanding of it went beyond that measure of faith which the Lord is wont to impart to His people during their pilgrimage." In his exposition of this chapter, *Luther* confesses: "It is indeed a prayer, heartfelt and earnest beyond measure, in which both to us and to His Father, He opens and lays bare the very abyss of His heart. But the power and the virtue which is contained in this prayer, we shall not, I fear, be able adequately to unfold. For in proportion as it sounds plain and simple, is it in reality deep, rich, and wide—that which none can fathom." *Bengel* likewise says: "The words of this chapter seem the easiest, while its meaning is the most profound of any in the whole Bible." With them also agrees *Hofacker*. At the commencement of his sermon on the High-Priestly prayer—a sermon remarkable for its rich unction—he thus speaks: "To preach on the Gospel of this day is no easy task. Not as if the words were difficult to understand; they are, on the contrary, very clear and simple. But the meaning that these words express is so profound, that with thoughts and words of ours we can never attain to it."

What, then, shall *we* do? Let us yield ourselves up to the influence of the Holy Ghost, that He may shed the love of Christ, which moved Him thus to pray, abroad in our hearts, as He did in St. John's. Then will an understanding of it be given to us, such as we need, and that which *Augustine* says of Scripture in general, that it is a stream "in which the lamb can wade and the elephant can swim," will prove equally true of the living stream of this prayer of Jesus Christ, that great High Priest of our profession, who is at once higher than heaven, and in His inmost heart meek and lowly. In this spirit let us venture on an exposition of this most holy prayer. There is dwelling with us the Spirit who searches even the deep things of the Godhead. May He, as the Spirit of prayer, teach us how to search into the words of *this* prayer—the prayer with which the Saviour put the last seal on all His words and deeds. Diligent and devout readers of St. John's Gospel, when they come to this 17th chapter—in which all the light of the Lord's foregoing discourses is gathered up into one sun of glory—bring with them a heart prepared in some measure to drink in its meaning; but they will hardly fail to listen in the attitude of prayer when they fain would know what the Saviour in prayer has taught them. Let us then first glance at the general connexion of the passage as a whole, and of its several parts, in order that we may then be able, in a devout and thankful spirit, to linger over each single verse.

The hour which should bring to the disciples trouble and anguish, offence and dissension, had now come. But He who has overcome the world, who calls upon His disciples to be of good cheer in His peace—He *is* of good cheer, and *has* peace in this hour. For He is not alone, but the Father is with Him, and with eyes clear as the unclouded sun He gazes into the heaven which is open above Him, and prays: "*Father, glorify Thou me!*" (See chap. xii. 28; xiii. 31).

This request *for Himself*, for His own glory, the divine Son of man, in the *first* part of His prayer (ver. 1-5), supports by a

threefold plea:—first, He makes reference *to the honour of the Father*, whom, through His being glorified, He desires to glorify in return ; then, *to the salvation of sinners*, who, by the Son's being glorified through the Father and the Father through the Son, shall have eternal life ; lastly, *to the faithful accomplishment of His mediatorial office*, whereby He has deserved His glorification as reward and crown.

In the second part (ver. 6-19), He proceeds to pray for the first possessors of eternal life, His *apostles*, to whom he has revealed His Father's name through the *word* which he has given them, and in whom he has been glorified, because they have believed in Him ; for them He prays that they, in the midst of a world which hates them, might be *kept* and *sanctified* in the truth, until they reach the goal of perfect Christian joy.

Already this intercession for his disciples' preservation and sanctification embraces the *whole body* of believers, as well as the apostles ; yet He expressly, in the *third* part, prays for His *whole Church* (ver. 20-26), that they all may be *one* in the truth—a holy missionary Church for the salvation of the world—and partakers of His glory,—at first, inwardly, as by faith partners in his love,—at last, openly, as by sight inheritors of His glorious kingdom.

J. Gerhard thus strikingly sets forth the connection of the whole : “ First of all, Christ prays for *Himself*, asking for His glorification, because He is the corner-stone of the Church (Eph. ii. 20), and because out of His merits alone descends to us every spiritual and heavenly blessing. Then He prays *for the apostles*, the ordained teachers of all the world, who in the word of the gospel were to offer to mankind those treasures of salvation which Christ has obtained for us ; on which account they are called the foundation of the Church, upon which all other believers are built. Lastly, He prays for the *whole Church*, whose members believe on him through the apostles' word. Thus, first, He speaks of the *merit* ; that through His

passion, death, and resurrection He designs to restore to men the salvation which they had lost ; praying that the Father would accept his offering. Secondly, He speaks of the *means* ; that through the word of the apostles He designs to diffuse abroad the good things obtained through his glorification ; praying that the Father would sanctify and fit the apostles for their office. Thirdly, He speaks of the *priest* ; that believers in general, by means of the apostolic word, are to become partakers of His blessings ; and He prays that the Father would keep them in unity of faith and love, and would lead them on at last to the end of faith, to heavenly glory."

Ver. 1. *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee."*

O Lord Jesus Christ, we thank Thee that Thou hast been mindful of us in this hour of prayer, and hast spoken out with Thy voice, in human words such as we might attain unto, Thy hearts' converse with Thy Father in heaven. Be pleased now to open heaven to us, that we may be permitted to know through Thee the mystery of Thy glorification of the Father, and that we may worthily praise Thee as the glorified One and the glorifier. The hour was coming, and willingly Thou didst enter into the hour which had been appointed for Thee in the counsel of the Father, when Thou, the Captain of our salvation, wast to be made perfect through suffering. There has now sprung up, and been gathered in, from the noble seed-time of this hour of suffering, the fruit of eternal life ! Now Thou art glorified, and ever since that hour of all grace, when Thou wast lifted up on the cross, Thou hast ruled as King and High Priest, sitting on Thy throne, that thou mightest draw all men unto Thee,—even us Thou hast long been drawing from our baptism to this hour ; in us Thou hast glorified *Thy* Father as *our* Father, the God of peace, who is holy and just, and for Thy sake loves us as His true children : go forward, O Thou great High Priest, with this labour of Thy grace on us and on all our

fellow-sinners, so that thy likeness in us may grow out into ever-increasing distinctness, until the divine copy is perfectly renewed in us, until in Thee we attain to the distinction, of which without Thee we are utterly destitute, of being a reflexion of the divine glory. Whenever we pray to Thy Father and our Father: "Hallowed be Thy name!" let Thy request dignify and give weight to ours; may the glorification which on Thee our Head has been perfected, enable us to be of good cheer, and patiently to wait for the glorification which Thou shalt fully accomplish on Thy Church. Yes, Thou shalt fully accomplish it; for thereto has God the Father sealed Thee; and with joy we hear Thee pleading before the Father who hath sent Thee this decree of eternal love.

Ver. 2, 3. *As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.*

That in our flesh Thou dost die and dost go to the Father for us, Thou callest, O Lord, a *power*! We adore that power of love which drew Thee from Thy Father's bosom into this poor death-condemned flesh of ours, in order that Thou mightest, through death, destroy the dominion of him who, over our flesh, had the power of death, and that Thou mightest give eternal life to Thy believing flock, whom the Father draws to Thee and gives to Thee for Thine own glorious possession. We remember, O Lord Jesus, Thy word, that all whom the Father giveth Thee shall come to Thee, and that him who cometh to Thee thou wilt in no wise cast out (chap. vi. 37): grant Thou that on that day when the complete number of all whom the Father has given Thee shall stand on the hill of Zion and sing to Thee, O Lamb of God, the new song which none but Thy believers can learn—grant that we too may there be found in the number of those who have come to Thee, and have continued with Thee to the end, as happy partners in eternal life. *Thou* hast life, Thou *art* life: enlighten us to a saving knowledge of thy precious

name, that the only true God, who alone is living and blessed, and alone makes living and blessed, we may find and embrace ; for Thou art sent in the flesh to reveal the glory of the unseen God. And do thou guard us from all false gods, from every way which *Thou* art not, Thou who art the way, the truth, and the life for all the children of men who are lost in the wandering of lies and death. Compassionate Saviour, in Thy name of Jesus may we ever find refuge ; in Thy name teach us to draw near, with Children's confidence and joy, to the Father, even as Thou here Thyself namest this saving name, saying it to Thy Father's heart that Thou art our JESUS ! Yes, for Thou hast performed the promise of Thy name given to Thee by the Angel ; and therefore it is that thy people now bow the knee to this name which is above every name, and honour Thee in Thy glorious majesty.

Ver. 4, 5. "*I have glorified Thee on the earth : I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou Me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.*"

We thank Thee, O Lord, that as the *servant* of God, foretold by the prophets, Thou hast in perfect obedience fulfilled everything for us, and that Thou didst not put Thy Father's cup away from Thy holy lips, until Thou hadst drunk it off to the full. Oh, may we never forget how much it cost Thee to accomplish Thy work of atonement upon earth, this accursed earth. Open Thou the ear of our heart, that we may hear Thy high-priestly voice, and be comforted thereby, remembering that, as in this hour of foretaste of Thy victory, so now evermore in heaven, Thou dost plead Thy obedience for us unto death, and dost make Thy blood, once shed, to speak on our behalf unto our eternal redemption and sanctification. Of that which was Thine own from all eternity, Thou hast emptied Thyself, that Thou mightest receive it again as the reward of Thy labour. O Lord, we thank Thy love which thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but humbled itself to that obe-

dience even unto death, which has obtained for us eternal righteousness and salvation. Cause Thy request, of which Thou art not ashamed, the humble request, "*O Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was,*" to be for us a well of joy and of strength. Teach us to comprehend with all saints the breadth and length, and depth and height of the love of God, which, according to its compassionate counsel, hath chosen us in Thee before the world was. May the eye of our mind behold Thee as Thou now, O eternal Word, come in our flesh, dost shine in our nature at the right hand of power, glorified as Jesus the Son of Mary, with the glory which may be seen with Thy Father—the glory which from the beginning Thou hadst, as only-begotten Son, eternal with the Father, and of equal power and honour with Him. Since there is now no weakness or death in Thee, but only power and life—no longer the form of a servant, but only glory—therefore our heart should no longer be troubled, but be of good cheer; for Thou, O Lord of Glory, art not ashamed to call us Thy brethren, members of Thy body, of Thy flesh, and of Thy bones, as those whom Thou dost nourish with the Spirit and life of Thy flesh, which is meat indeed—of Thy blood, which is drink indeed. Keep us, through obedience to this Thy word, in the adoring confession of Thy glorified humanity; and make us to proclaim aloud this divine, this blessed mystery which the Spirit of truth has given to Thy Church; make us in true faith to realise the joy of the Bride, and to put our seal thereto, whenever we receive Thee in the bread and in the cup of the sacrament, until Thou comest. Amen.

Even in His prayer for *His own* glorification, the Lord acted as our *high-priest*; since it is *for us*, as our Jesus, that He has been glorified with the glory which, as the eternal Word, the Creator of every creature, He had with the Father before the world was. But presently in express terms He presents His own people (the *apostles*, and in them, also, *all* true disciples) to the Father in His name, and *prays for them*. Having loved

His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end; therefore in love He now prays for them, in the love which shares eternal blessedness with the beloved ones. "It is just in the moments when in His thoughts He soars the highest, that he recollects His disciples." (Luthardt.) First, (ver. 6-10), He brings forward the *ground on which His intercession might expect to be heard*, by distinguishing the disciples from the world, as believing receivers of the gospel, rising gradually till He reaches the climax in the declaration: "*I am glorified in them.*" Then (ver. 11-19) the interceding High-Priest presents His disciples, yet struggling *in* the world, though chosen *out* of the world, to the sympathies of His Father's heart, praying that He will *keep them from the evil* through *sanctification in the truth*, His intercession dividing itself into two heads: First (ver. 13), He prays that "His joy may be in them," and then (ver. 19), that they may receive the blessing of His "*sanctification* for them." The High-Priest's sanctification of Himself for His own is the cause why His intercession should be heard on *His* side. It is upon His meritoriousness that His prayer for His believers rests; His high-priestly *intercession* is grounded on His high-priestly *sacrifice*.

Ver. 6-8. "*I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word.* Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.*"

Thus, O Lord, dost thou present Thy first-fruits among men

* " '*They were Thine,*' He says; that is, whoever hears the word, opens his heart and ears, and lets the revelation sound and echo within him, belongs not to the world, but to Me. Now, since it is certain that they are *Mine*, and that I am their Lord and Master and Saviour, it is also certain and beyond doubt that they are *Thine*; and not only are they now *Thine*, but they were *Thine* from the beginning, and through Thee they came to Me." (Luther.)

to Thy Father ; and it is with a Saviour's joy that Thou doest it, with delight in the children of men. We praise Thee, O Thou lover of the fallen creation, that Thou hast approached thus near to men, nearer than to the holy angels, that by the revelation of Thy glory as the only-begotten Son of the Father, Thou hast revealed to us the name of the one true God, and hast given unto us Thy Spirit, which cries within us, *Abba, Father*. In Thy light do we see light ; in Thy face, who art the graciousness of God, do we truly see and know God, that He is pure love ; through Thy word we gaze into the Fatherly heart of Thy God and our God.* We thank Thee for Thy precious word—"a light unto our path," guiding us home to our Father in heaven. Us, too, Thou didst lovingly embrace, when Thou spakedst to Thine apostles the words of eternal life ; to us likewise belonged the care which Thou didst bestow on these pupils of Thy Father, whilst Thou soughtest that, as true children of Abraham, they might "rejoice to see" the gospel-day in seeing Thy glory, and that by the light of the prophetic word, which they first had kept, they might come at last to Thee, Thou bright and morning Star. Under Thy labour they acquired sensitive and honest hearts, hearts from God ; and from Thy words and works with joy they perceived that Thou art surely come from God. Now, O Lord, lead us in this blessed path of Thy disciples, from knowledge to knowledge, to perfect faith and blessed peace. Impart richly to us of Thy grace, that the eternal gospel which they received from Thee,

* "He who with the eyes of the Spirit knows Jesus Christ, he knows also God's wonderful revelation, His all-holiest name. From the cradle to the grave, from Jordan to the brook Kedron, from the Mount of Transfiguration to the fatal hill of Golgotha, the whole of Christ's life, His sufferings and His death—ay, and afterwards His resurrection—are nothing but the most clear and most blessed revelation of the name of God by which He will be called by us. We see and hear nothing but His goodness and glory in which He passes before us, and in His own person, in the highest possible degree His own, with hands uplifted to bless, He proclaims to us His name, that He is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and of great goodness and truth." (Löhe.)

that they might spread it abroad in the whole world, may also in us, as in them, take root and abide, and that we, together with them, may honour Thee as the true Prophet, whose words are purely words of God, and whose works purely works of God, that so we may share likewise in the blessing of Thy intercessory prayer for those who have received Thy word, and who, in Thee, have known the true God and eternal life. How tender and gracious is the glance of Thine eyes, O Lord, when they are looking for faith ! The confession of Thy weak disciples, " Now we believe that Thou camest forth from God," Thou dost with tender satisfaction take from their lips into Thine own, and before Thy Father Thou dost confess them as Thy believers ! One thing we pray Thee, that we may cling to Thee and to Thy word with a guileless heart ; for then will we comfort ourselves in this, that Thy tender love as our Mediator will cover all our shortcomings, and mightily supply our weakness, that so we poor sinners may also be included in this intercessory prayer, wherein with so much complacency Thou dost remember Thy people.

Ver. 9, 10. "*I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me ; for they are thine.* And*

* " But how does it suit that He does not mean to pray for the world, if yet He has taught us, in Matt. v. 4, that we are to pray for our enemies which persecute us, and who revile both our name and doctrine ? The answer is short : To pray for the world, and *not* to pray for the world, both must be right and fitting. For He himself says, soon after, '*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.*' Now, these must be of the world (before they are converted), and therefore, for the sake of them who shall hereafter come to Him, He must pray for the world. St. Paul was surely of the world when he persecuted Christians, even unto death ; yet St. Stephen prayed for him, so that he was converted. And when on the cross, Christ himself prays, '*Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do.*' Thus is both equally true, that He does pray, and that He does not pray for the world. But herein lies the difference : He prays, *not for the world in the same fashion* that He prays for His Christians. His prayer for Christians is, that they may abide, and increase, or go on in the true faith, and not fall from it ; but for those who are not in the faith, He prays that they may abandon their own way and come to Him." (Luther.)

all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine ; and I am glorified in them."

Thou, Saviour of all men, and especially of Thy believers, we thank Thee, that through Thy blood, Thou hast delivered us, and through Thy intercession drawn us to Thee, from the world. Thou dost include us, too, in this prayer of Thine, in which Thou dost urge it upon the Father's heart, that those may *continue* Thy possession whom He has given Thee, that Thou mayest give unto them eternal life. If Thy request is well-pleasing to the Father, when Thou prayest for evil-doers, and gains for Thee a vast multitude for Thy "spoil" out of the world ; can it fail of being heard when Thou prayest, not for the world, which knows not Thee nor the Father, but for those who have been delivered out of the world, for those *in* whom, at the same time, the "other Comforter" prays, the Holy Ghost, who glorifies Thee in them ! Yes, then Thou prayest with power, as one who has a right to require. Thou sayest, "*I pray for Mine own.*" Help us then, firmly to lay hold on this comfort of Thy word, and in Thy name to plead before the Father, who himself loves us, that Thou hast said "*All Thine are Mine, and Mine are Thine,*" that we may receive from God's riches that which *in Thee* belongs also to *us* ; that, therefore, all is ours, for Thou sayest, "*I am glorified in them,*"—whereby Thou dost set us forth to Thy Father as clothed through the word of Thy grace in Thy righteousness, and fashioned into Thy likeness as happy companions with Thee in Thy life, worthy of the good pleasure which the Father takes in Thee, His beloved Son. Although we cannot discern and find in ourselves what thy love ascribes to us, we will yet beat down all doubt, in the belief that our Heavenly Father views us as Thou dost exhibit us to Him ; and with the disciples, who *were* clean through Thy word, and who *became* clean through the Spirit of sanctification, we will rest wholly upon Thy blood, which offers to us peace in righteousness and power for sanctification. Make us *believe*, O Lord, that

Thou art glorified in us, in order that we may hereafter *behold* what we shall actually be, when made like unto Thee. Amen.*

Ver. 11-13. "*And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*"†

O Lord, those in whom Thou art glorified are in the world. Of this Thou hast been mindful in Thy High-Priestly heart, in that hour when Thou wast hastening to leave the world and go to the Father. Thou canst, therefore, sympathise with the weakness of Thy people, who bear Thee a heavenly treasure in earthen vessels; Thou, who art no longer in the world, experiencing its hatred and persecution, for this purpose hast Thou suffered in the world, and been in all points tempted, though without sin, that Thou, having gone to the Father as Conqueror, mightest be able to succour the sinners who have been given to

* "Every worshipper of God, in spirit and in truth, can urge whatever concern weighs upon his mind before the great God, as God's own affair, and on that ground appeal to the honour of His name. In the disciples' behaviour at that time there was much that was unworthy, and, indeed, blameable; but their inward life, from the glorification of Jesus in their hearts, shone brighter in the eyes of this Omniscient One than acts, ever so showy, would have done."
—Rieger.

† "*These things I speak, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves; that is, that they may have comfort and joyous confidence through the word, which they have heard with their ears and received into their hearts, and that they may be able to say, "Behold, my Lord Jesus Christ hath said this; thus faithfully and earnestly has He prayed for me; I have heard it from His own lips, or received it from those who heard it, and whom He hath sent to preach it to me, that He will not forsake me, but that He will guard and keep me through the Father's almighty, eternal power and might. Behold, this is the meaning of having His joy fulfilled; hereto appertains that, with all our heart, we hold fast by the word; there we shall ever find joy and comfort, to become the happier the longer we live."*—Luther.

Thee out of the world, but who are hated and persecuted in the world. Therefore do we approach with joy to the Throne of Grace, and dare to stand in Thy name, Lord Jesus, before Thy Holy Father's awful Majesty. The name *Holy* is no longer terrible to us, but full of comfort, for it is the *Father*, Thy Father and our Father, who is the Holy One in heaven, whose love sanctifies poor sinners who are in the world. Yes, Lord God, Blessed Father, Thou Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we plead before Thee this Thy Son's prayer for us, that Thou wouldest keep us in Thy Name. Grant, then, that Thy name, Thy paternal holiness, may be the one element in which we live and move, the strong safeguard to protect us from being entrapped in worldly-mindedness and worldly business. Help us, that Thy holy word and Gospel may be purely taught amongst us, and that we may gladly hear the same, and keep it in our hearts, that we also, through it, may be sanctified and saved. Guard us, that we depart not from Thy name, nor fall into a false, illusive holiness, but that we abide by Thy word, the true sanctuary, which alone sanctifies everything. All that Thou, Holy Father, hast given to Thy Son, the Glorifier of Thy name, *that* do Thou vouchsafe to preserve in Him, as one Church of holy ones, that they may be *one*, as Thou, Father, art one with the Son. Yes, pour abundantly the Holy Ghost upon all Thy believers, that He may fill them with the same holy life in love, in which Thou art essentially one with the eternal Son, and in Thy holy Church upon earth do Thou cause to arise, and evermore brightly to shine, the reflection of the holy unity which is in heaven.

O blessed Father, vouchsafe to hear the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ for the Church also, which is now in the world, even as Thou didst for the apostles.* Thy dear Son truly did

* "What Christ here prays for He obtained. Since then the Apostles are one in unity of faith, *i.e.*, since their teaching, as represented in Holy Scripture, shines upon us in perfect uniformity, let us hold fast by the apostolic doctrine as by the foundation of the Church's true and wholesome unity, for then will it come to pass that true unity will flourish amongst us too. If we

not leave them comfortless. Though scattered every one to his own, it was but for a little moment. With great mercy didst Thou gather them, and gavest unto them the Comforter, who made them and kept them one in Thy name. Vouchsafe, then, likewise to extend over us the protection of Thy love, even as Christ extended His lively care to protect His own when he was with them in the world.

O holy Father, give us a heart *willing* to be kept and sanctified in the world! Thy son's lamentation over the lost child* pierces our heart; with trembling we remember the word that is written: "His delight was in cursing, and it shall happen unto him; he loved not blessing, therefore shall it be far from him" (Ps. cix. 17). Examine me, O God, and know my heart; prove me and know my thoughts! See if perchance there be any among us going the way of the betrayer, loving destruction, from which Thou wilt fain protect Thy children, better than the life which Thou art ready to give unto them. Oh, if there be such an one, fetch him back, before he fall into eternal destruction!

But if in our assembly there is a son of perdition who shall be lost, because Thou dost not force Thy saints, only invitest them, then let us comfort ourselves with the comfort which the Saviour of this lost one feels that He may utter forth before Thee, that He had not neglected him, nor failed to bestow upon him the labour of love which Thou didst charge Him with (chap. vi. 39). May it never happen that any neglected *by us* shall witness against us in hell, but rather do Thou comfort us with the Scripture in which the way of this and of all the children of perdition stands recorded beforehand. Comfort us with the precious, "It is written," in which Thy dear Son Himself

are kept by the Father in His name; that is, if we hold fast by the gospel which the Father has given to Christ, and Christ to His apostles, and are preserved in the true knowledge of God, then have we arrived at the spiritual unity which is well-pleasing before God."—J. Gerhard.

* "The son of perdition!" In Luther's Bible, "The lost child."—Tr.

reposed in that devout converse of His with Thee. O holy God, Thy work no man can hinder. Thou art sanctified *in* them whom Thy love keeps through faith unto salvation, and Thou art sanctified *upon* them who harden themselves against Thy love, and who by their condemnation set their seal to the truth that there is no life apart from Thee. Open our eyes, that we may recognise, as in the children of light, so also in the children of darkness, the loudly-speaking triumphs of Thy truth, and that we may adoringly observe to our edification how Thou, according to predetermined counsel, and for the fulfilment of Scripture which cannot be broken, dost guide and lead, step by step, not Thy children only who commit themselves into Thy hands, from which no man can pluck them, but also the children of perdition who fall into Thy hands, from which no man can save them. This do Thou graciously teach us to know, and thus lead us on to that pure rejoicing in Thy holiness which no man can take from us. May that which our holy High Priest so rejoicingly speaks in this hour concerning His departure to Thee, the Holy Father, become a source of joy to us also as it should have been to the apostles—a joy which has its issue in that eternal life of joy where we shall behold Thy holy Majesty face to face, and receive with such perfect satisfaction as Christ Himself has experienced, that fulness of blessing, commencing in the world, and continuing for ever in heaven, which our Advocate's precious prayer has obtained for us. Thereto may we attain, that we may magnify Thy name for ever, through Christ our Lord.

Ver. 14-16. "*I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the*

* "He Himself was never of the world, for even in that form of a servant which He assumed, He was born of the Holy Spirit, of whom we are born again. Those who are born again of the Spirit are no longer of the world, just as He who was born of the Spirit is not of the world."—Augustine.

evil. They are not of this world, even as I am not of the world."

Lord Jesus, teach us so to pray for ourselves as Thou dost pray for us. Thou knowest how long and tedious seems to us our abode in the world, and that we would rather be at home with Thee in perfect joy, together with all that mourn in Zion. But thou knowest also that our desire to depart is not yet sufficiently pure, that we feel more powerfully thrust away by the misery that is in the world, than allured away by the joy which is in heaven. Oh, do Thou thoroughly purify our hearts, that we may not deceive ourselves! Help us to flee the world, not only when it is irksome to us, but also, ay, and more especially, when it smiles to our view, that we may flee more from its love than from its hate. Teach us with humble hearts to thank Thee for everything by which the world that hates Thy word, and all those who are begotten through Thy word, reminds us that we are all strangers here, and that our "citizenship" is in heaven (Phil. iii. 20); but teach us, above all, to thank Thee when the loving, fatherly discipline which Thou didst pray for on our behalf, loosens off from our own inward man one piece after another of the world, that so, Thy prayer for us may be fulfilled, and we may be kept from the evil. Yea, Lord, that is our desire—we would be kept from the evil! To be kept from the evil one, the fiend, in whom the whole world lies as in its own proper element; to be kept from his deeds and character, from which Thy grace has rescued us, but into which the world now by its storms and threats, now by its flatteries and allurements, would entangle us again. Display in us, Thou mighty God and Saviour, that same almighty love by which Thou didst preserve thine apostles, even a Peter, bringing them safely through the hour of temptation—that same love wherewith Thou hast from age to age enabled all those to fulfil their course who now in heaven glorify Thee, the living miracles and master-works of Thy hand. Without Thee we can do nothing; and when we consider the world, how it is running down the broad

road of sin into destruction ; when we consider the prince of this world, and the subtle assaults of his mighty rage ; when we contemplate ourselves, our weakness, our perverseness, and all the misery of our corrupt heart ; oh, we are almost then inclined to deem it altogether impossible that we should be kept unto salvation. But we lay hold upon Thy word, O Lord ; that which is impossible with man is yet possible to the Almighty God ; and upon His heart, the heart of the Father, who is greater than all, Thou hast laid us and our needs, with the prayer that He would keep us from the evil. Does this distinguishing quality of discipleship, that we love Thy word, and are not of the world, bring the world's hatred and persecution into the lists against us ? Yet still Thy word bids us be of good cheer ; for this same token of our discipleship summons the Almighty Father to our protection, that He should keep Thine own in the world, who, like Thee, are not of the world. Like as Thou wast in the world, grant, Lord Jesus, that thus we may be in the world. Thou didst not desire to leave the world until Thou hadst accomplished the work upon earth which the Father had given Thee to do. Thou didst not pray that the hour of Thine apostles' departure might arrive, until they should have patiently fought to the end the fight which was appointed to them, and fulfilled their apostolic work in the world. For this which serves to our salvation we thank Thee ; and we pray that Thou wouldest direct our course likewise in this world, that we may every day *ourselves become* more perfect fruit, and every day *bring forth* more perfect fruit for Thy heavenly kingdom, until the joyful time of harvest shall arrive. If an hour should come to us, such as came to our brethren in Jerusalem, when the world's hatred for Thy word's sake burst forth upon them, then grant unto us, like them, to remember Thy prayer for Thy confessors, and through Thy Spirit do Thou awaken our hearts, like theirs (Acts v. 41), to praise Thy holy name.

Ver. 17-19. "*Sanctify them, through Thy truth : Thy word*

is truth. As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."*

O Lord, Thou dost teach us to know that it is through our *sanctification* that we are *kept*. Thine apostles, whose feet Thou didst wash, were through sanctification kept in the way, when in the spirit of priests they "ministered" the gospel among the heathen (Rom. xv. 16). As branches in Thee it was by being purged by the Husbandman that they brought forth much fruit. Teach us to follow in their footsteps ; awaken us to a right-minded zeal in our hatred of the evil one, from whose perdition we desire to be kept, and in our love of the truth, through which we desire to live and to be saved. Thou hast promised us the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, to abide with us for ever, and to apply to us the fruit of Thy intercession. Help us then to yield ourselves to His influence, to be wholly penetrated in body, soul, and spirit with God's holy life of light and love. Thus mayest Thou, O holy Son of God, who art Thyself the Truth, from day to day be more perfectly glorified in us, and thus may we daily die to the world which, for its father, hath the murderer and liar. We thank Thee, dearest Saviour, that neither in this utterance of prayer hast Thou been silent concerning the means by which Thine and the Father's Spirit will sanctify us to live in the truth and to do the truth. *It is the Word*, the Word of the Father—that which Thou Thyself from eternity art—that which in time past Thou hast spoken by Thy prophets, until at length thou didst come in the fulness of time to dwell amongst us, and to speak to us. And as the Father sanctified Thee, and sent Thee into the world, that Thou shouldest bear witness unto the truth, so didst Thou send Thy holy apostles into the world,

* "Hereby He authorises the blessed apostles to be doctors and preachers, and binds us to hang upon their lips, all of us, learned and unlearned. Every one must humble himself, however wise and prudent he may be, to be taught and schooled by the poor, rude fishermen, and to listen to them as to the Lord Jesus Himself." (Luther).

that with tongues of the Spirit they might bear witness unto the truth in which they themselves were sanctified, and that their word might be the means of sanctification to all whom the Father, having given Thee out of the world, shall draw to Thee, until the number of the saints shall be complete, and the last one shall have come to Thee. Since, therefore, we know what truth is, namely, Thy word, O Thou true God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, do Thou be pleased to make us abide in Thy word, that we no more seek for ought else; and lead us on in the path of sanctification which Thy clear word points out to us, and in which the holy apostles have trod before us. Lord Jesus Christ, do Thou deeply impress in our hearts this high-priestly confession of Thy lips, for which Thy saints shall humbly thank Thee to all eternity; yea, grant that this the very heart, this central sum of Thy high-priestly prayer, yea, of all Scripture, may never be obscured to our view; "FOR THEIR SAKES I SANCTIFY MYSELF, THAT THEY ALSO MIGHT BE SANCTIFIED THROUGH THE TRUTH." * Thanksgiving and praise be to Thee, O great High-Priest; for that Thou hast given Thyself as a sacrifice for us, that we also may become in Thee a true sacrifice, well-pleasing to God! Thine unswerving obedience unto death, even the death of the cross; the patience with which, O Thou silent Lamb of God,

* "What is the meaning of '*For their sakes I sanctify Myself*'? It is this: I present Myself to Thee as a sacrifice. All sacrifices are called *holy*, because they are gifts consecrated to God. But because the old dispensation represented the shadow of sanctification, whilst the new dispensation contained it in its truth, therefore He says, '*that they also might be sanctified through the truth*;' for them also do I present unto Thee as an offering." (Chrysostom.) He said that the Father should sanctify them, and *that* through the means of the word: then some one might ask, What sanctification is it? or, What word is it which holds out and brings it to us? Such questioning Christ now designs to meet: This it is whereby they must be sanctified, to wit, that *I sanctify Myself for their sakes*. That is a glorious saying and beyond measure rich, and contains in briefest form the sum of all, that Christ is our Priest, and Himself steps forward for us to offer himself on the cross to God the Father, that so through His sacrifice and death, we might be reconciled to God and be saved. *This is our one great article of belief, and the fountain of all the comfort whereof we, as Christians, know.*" (Luther.)

Thou didst bear the sin of the world, not casting it off Thee until Thou hadst expiated it by Thy blood ; Thy mighty love which caused Thee to sink even to the likeness of sinful flesh, that thou might be able to pay for us the wages of sin with Thy death, to overcome the power of sin by Thy righteousness, and thus, through Thyself to purge our sins, all that which, when lifted up on the cross, Thou didst seal with Thy word, "It is finished !" all that Thou dost now plead with Thy reconciled Father in the words : "*For their sakes I sanctify Myself.*" Help us, Lord Jesus, in true faith to lay hold on Thy sanctification for us, that we may penetrate into the fellowship of Thy death and of Thy life, that we may die to sin and live unto righteousness, and thus be made holy unto that holiness which in the sight of Thy holy Father appears to be such in truth. Grant to us daily to enter into that grace wherein we stand as members of Thy holy body, baptized into Thy death, "purified through the washing of water in the word," that we may daily more fully *become* what, in Thee, Thy Church *is*, adorned with Thy glory, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish." When we are dispirited and affrighted on account of the imperfection of all the sacrifices of our poor life, then do Thou comfort us with Thy perfect sacrifice, wherein Thou didst sanctify Thine own self for us ; but, on the other hand, awaken us up out of every idle dream of joy, whenever we would fain cover ourselves with the robe of Thy righteousness, while we do not "hate the garment spotted by the flesh." Write it in characters of the Spirit on our hearts, that Thou for this cause didst sanctify Thyself for us, that we also might truly be sanctified. Yea, Lord, teach us to rest in Thy peace and to walk in Thy joy, confidently to trust in the sacrifice of Thy sanctification alone, and in a holy life of self-sacrifice, unwaveringly, and without tiring to follow thee, until hereafter it is revealed what we shall be—when Thou shalt appear wholly glorious in us, we having been made wholly

glorious in Thee, and altogether like Thee in holiness. Even so, Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus, when praying for His *apostles*, bears likewise on His high-priestly heart His whole apostolic Church; and we have doubtless prayed according to His will, when entreating that the blessing of His intercession may descend upon us likewise. But our Lord's interceding love approaches even yet nearer to us, putting it beyond all doubt, that in this hour He has remembered every one of us. "This is a text which we might well write in letters of pure gold, for to us it peculiarly belongs." (Luther.) "What Christian's heart should not melt," says an old writer, "when he here distinctly sees that God's eternal Son has prayed to His Father for *him*, even *that He might be one with us*,—He, concerning whom the Christian knows that 'the Father hears Him always,' and that His prayer for Himself and for all shall no less be heard than His prayer for His apostles?" As in verse 18 the Lord especially commended to His Father's preserving and sanctifying love, those messengers of the word of reconciliation just sent into the world, so now His prayer immediately turns to all who, through the apostle's word, shall at any time believe on Him and joyfully confess the precious thought, "*Christ for our sakes has sanctified Himself, that we also might be truly sanctified.*"

He prays for the *oneness* of all believers in Him and the Father (ver. 20, 21), whereby He may embrace His whole Church together with the apostles who were her first-fruits (ver. 11). "This is indeed a true heavenly ladder, which stands upon the earth, but whose top reaches unto heaven; ay! even to the throne of God, as where the supremest unity dwells. We, however, may not begin at the top, but must see to it that we rightly find the first steps. This precious one in Christ's kingdom, arising from the sure ground of faith, from the certain goal of hope, and from the unanimity of love, is contemplated as that which shall be a witness to the world, just as

also at first it was blessed to be, and as at no time it wholly ceases to be." (Acts ii. 44-47. Rieger.)

Jesus Christ acknowledges His believers who are all one, as His appointed *companions* in His glory—a glory which already exists even in this world in the hearts of the beloved of the Father, but which by-and-by will be openly manifest together with the glory of the eternally beloved Son (ver. 22-24); finally, He again separates His Church from the world, and demands from His Father's *righteousness* the hearing of his prayer, the whole fulness of which he sums up in the words, "I in them" (ver. 25, 26).

Ver. 20, 21. "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.*"

Before Thine eyes, O Lord, stands Thy Church present; Thou beholdest it as built through the word of Thy apostles, upon Thee, the precious corner-stone, and fitly joined together through one Spirit into one building; it goes on increasing, century after century, until the last day, growing into a holy temple of Thy glory, a witness to the world that Thou truly art JEHOVAH, and Thy Church God's tabernacle among men. Oh, do Thou open our dim eyes, that we too may see what Thou sawest and dost now see while contemplating the future of Thy believers! Lead us seriously to reflect that all for which Thou didst pray to Thy Father on behalf of Thy Church is comprehended in this petition for the holy oneness of Thy believers. We can never hear this word of Thine, O blessed Lord, without a sigh, nor can we help wishing that Thou wouldest this day remove us from earth to heaven, that we might there behold in its clearness what we almost despair of finding upon earth—the *glorious unity of Thy believers!* And yet, Thou hast prayed that they all may be one in Thee and Thy Father even in this their earthly life. "One faith!" thus sounds before Thee the praise

of Thy Church (Eph. iv. 5), the city on the hill, which with thousand bright beams of one undivided light—*Thy* light, O Thou who art the true light—shines into the dark, bewildered, distracted world ! Thou forbiddest us then to forget our sorrow over the rending in two of that which ought to be joined together in one through Thy blood, even when indulging in the hope of the heavenly city ; Thou forbiddest us to adjourn our joyful hope of seeing the fulfilment of Thy high-priestly prayer, till the last day. What, O Lord, shall we do ? Thy word tells us : Repent must we, repentance from Thee must we implore on behalf of all men, for our disobedience to THE WORD OF TRUTH. Those who believe on Thee *through the word of Thy apostles*, they it is who are made one by the Holy Ghost, as Thou art one with the Father ; they it is who are presented to Thee as one Church filled with Thine and the Father's divine life, as a habitation of the living God to the world's wonder and admiration.*

Thus is Thy Church not wanting in the means of being made one, for Thou didst not leave her destitute, when Thou tookest the souls of the apostles from the world ; their word, the blessed apostolic word, is with us still, the eternal gospel. Keep us, then, dear Lord, from the error of these days, when men run after new apostles who shall make Thy Church one. Gather together through the old and ever new apostolic word all who through one baptism are sanctified into one body with Thee, unto the one true, "like precious faith" (2 Pet. i. 1). Let the Word reign, the Word alone, in kingly dignity, and let every spirit in due submissiveness bow before the clear, enlightening law—the testimony which giveth wisdom unto the simple—the utterance of the one Spirit, who testifies in the holy Scriptures ; thus, O Lord, shall we fulfil Thy joy, and rejoice with Thee over Zion, because Thou buildest her ! Then will the world

* "The Father the root, Christ the stem, the Holy Ghost the sap, believers the branches sucking in the sap, the Christian life the fruit of one tree—such is the holy Church." (Gerhard.)

give over her Babel-building, and all that will allow itself to be drawn to Thee out of the world shall come as in the days of the apostles, and honour Thee in Thy holy Pentecostal edifice ; for then shall they confess that it is God alone who can build thus, and not man. And so speakest Thou to us : " Who hath despised the day of small things ? " (Zech. iv. 10). From this sin preserve us, Thou who art the awakener of Lazarus and all Thy friends, who also hast given us the word : " Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God ? " Increase in us the knowledge of Thy mighty grace, through which, in the midst of the Babylonish confusion of this troubled time, Thou hast preserved still Thy holy apostolic Church, the Church of the pure Word of Truth, and hast still left a holy seed remaining to *that* congregation whose inward unity, and outward visible welding together, is alone founded on Thy holy gospel.* Give us enlightened minds, that we may never stumble at the poor appearance of the Church's outward condition while Thou alone art her builder and defender ; but rather esteem as a precious jewel the thorns of Thy cross's crown which Thou hast bequeathed to her, forasmuch as we are sure that Thou still art a King, the true King, and Thy kingdom an everlasting kingdom. Keep us stedfast in the narrow way of Thy truth, and protect us from the wily assaults of men who would bring about the union of all the scattered children of God, which Thou hast promised and for which Thou hast prayed, *by the neglect of* Thy word instead of *through* Thy word, by being *silent* concerning the truth, instead of *confessing* it. Does the little band of Thy united ones appear too small ? Do Thou open our eyes, that we may behold the crowd of witnesses with which we are encompassed about as with a bright cloud, and refresh us by its dew, by the help which the witness of our perfected brethren, together with the

* The author of course refers to the " United Evangelical Church " of Germany, formed by the blending together some years since of the Reformed and Lutheran Churches into one communion. (*Tr.*)

holy angels, extends to us; for to this heavenly assembly are we come, by being members of the Church which is one to all times and in all places, one here below and there above. Are we ready to faint, and does it seem long to wait? Do Thou gladden our eyes with a sight of the new city, which shall descend from heaven upon the glorified earth, that we may read on her pearly gates the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, Thy true Israel, brought together from all the ends of the world through the word of Thy apostles, who shine like precious stones on the foundations of the city of God. But above all, may we gaze upon Thee, who art the eternal Sun of grace and truth, the faithful beginner and perfecter of faith, that so we may be strengthened in the path from shame to glory which Thou hast trodden before in order to draw us on after Thee; and grant that by faith we may at all times discern the glory which Thou assignest to thy saints in time, that it may be revealed in them in eternity.

Ver. 22, 23. "*And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; * that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.*"

Lord Jesus, Thou Lord of glory, Thy majesty is served by angels who stand before Thy throne with veiled faces, and cannot endure the brightness of Thy beauty. And can we hear

* "What glory is it which Christ has, and which He gives to us? It is this which He has just before said, that *they all may be one, as the Father and I are one*. This is the excellent treasure, it is a fountain—ay, it is the real, true mine of all divine blessings, of life, comfort, blessedness—if only we could *believe* it! But faith is not an idle, lazy thought—it is a living, earnest, comforting, and undoubting confidence of the heart in this excellent glory of ours, whereby we are made one thing with Christ, and through Him with the Father also; so that just as little as Christ can be torn or separated from the Father, just so little is it possible that the Christian Church, and each individual member thereof, can be divided from Him, and therefore that all is attached and bound together, the one to the other, as has already been dwelt upon." (Luther.)

Thee aright speaking thus before Thy Father : "*The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them ?*" It is not of angels, that Thou thus speakest, but of sinners as we are. Oh, what are we that Thou shouldest thus be mindful of us ? We have accompanied Thy holy apostle John through His Gospel, and with delight have continually echoed His holy theme : "We saw His glory," Thy glory, O incarnate Word, Thy dwelling among us full of grace and Truth. But now greater things do we hear from Thy gracious lips ; not in Thee alone, but in ourselves also, are we to behold the glory which the Father has given Thee ; for Thou hast given it to them who, through Thy apostles, believe on Thee. We extol Thy poverty for our sakes, gracious Redeemer, which has made us rich ! Thou didst come down from heaven, and became one with our poor flesh and blood, that we might become one with Thy flesh and blood, which is spirit and life, and through Thee, one with the living Father : "*I in them. and Thou in Me.*" Thus dost thou present Thy Church to the Father in the bridal array of Thine own glory ! Thou sittest at the right hand of God in heaven ; Thou dwellest also in our hearts, because we believe in Thee ; this is Thy glory, this is ours ! O Lord, we cannot worthily speak of Thy unutterable grace : it is too wonderful, too high for us ; but one thing we know, that this Thy word of prayer is true ; we doubt it not, but we joyfully prepare ourselves for that blessed day, when, amid the amazement of every angel, Thy gracious confession shall be unsealed to us : "*The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them.*" Only lead us safely up the several steps of glory, from faith to sight. Teach us to receive grace for grace out of Thy fulness ; give us as our own through Thy word, Thy righteousness and Thy peace, Thy joy and Thy life ; dwell in our hearts through the faith which Thou workest in us, and grant us to be rooted in Thee through the love which Thou kindest ; unite us together ever more and more closely with all those who have been "begotten through the word of truth," that we may experience more and more the

glory and the loveliness of the communion between the members of Thy body ; may we, together with Thy whole Church, grow up in all things unto Thee, who art the Head, until we come to the perfect unity of faith and knowledge which Thou hast set before her as her aim, and which Thou, as her High-Psiest, hast guaranteed for her. Bless also the holy mission which Thou dost entrust to Thy Church, that she should proclaim the love of God in Thee to pardoned sinners, and that thus sharing in Thy glory, she may carry out Thy purpose confirmed by an oath, that the whole world shall be full of Thy glory. Blessed Lord, we understand Thee ! Thou dost not pray for the world, but for Thy Church, that it may win to Thee out of the world whatsoever will hear Thy voice, that the host may be perfect of those whose very names stand written in Thy high-priestly heart, and who shall inherit the blessing of this Thy prayer. Impart, then, to Thy Church pentecostal tongues of fire, as at the beginning, and give her to be a blessing to the heathen, that she may win victory after victory, until Thou shalt make the world which continues to be the world, and which will not bow before the love of God exhibited in Thy Church, the footstool under Thy feet and her feet ; then shalt Thou with terrible power force all to confess that the Father hath sent Thee ; and that with one and the same love He doth embrace both Thee and Thy Church, Thee the Head and us the members, Thee the vine and us the branches, Thee the bridegroom and us the bride, Thee the captain and us Thy host—that favoured host to which at last, after having completely overcome, Thou wilt grant to sit with Thee on Thy throne, even as Thou hast overcome, and art set down with Thy Father on His throne. This, O Lord, is Thy will, and it shall be done ; for thus Thou speakest to thy Father :

Ver. 24. *“ Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am ; * that they may behold My*

* This is the last, but the most comforting part of this prayer for all who cling to Christ, spoken that we may be certain and sure what we have finally

glory, which Thou hast given Me : for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

O most blessed Saviour, we poor sinners give thanks to Thee for these words of Thy tender, surpassing love ; and we pray Thee that Thou wouldest ever make us mindful of them in every sorrow in the world, and especially at our last hour.* Into the *will* of thy Majesty we cast the anchor of our hope ; to the world and its prince, who would fain destroy us, we oppose Thy stedfast, unmoveable—" *Father, I will.*" For this end, in Gethsemane, didst Thou so humbly pray for Thyself, " *Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt*" —for this, that Thy bold, kingly request here made for us, " *Father, I will,*" may bring us to glory. To be with Thee, O Jesus, is indeed blessedness and salvation ; and this Thou hast already given us, inasmuch as Thou didst graciously unite us with Thee by our baptism into Thy death, and through the sacrament of Thy body and blood dost keep us united with Thee. But what we possess through faith in Thy word shall also be made manifest ; it is Thy will that our *being with Thee* shall appear, to wit, in the glorious body on the day of our resurrection. From being pardoned inmates in God's house upon earth, which is His holy Church, it is Thy will that we

to hope for, when we shall find rest and home ; for here in the world we are wretched, and thrust hither and thither, and have no continuing city. Now, where may this place be ? What is its name ? *Where I am*, He says—that is, in the arms and bosom of the Father, whither all angels must run to bear and carry us. Therefore we should take this text for the pillow and bed of down on which our souls shall repose, and with joyful hearts should we flee to it when the blessed hour is at hand, that, delivered from sin and misery, as well as from the power of the world and the devil, our souls shall be brought to everlasting rest and joy." (Luther.)

* When Arnd was dying, he cried out with a cheerful voice, " We saw His glory, a glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." On his wife asking him when he had seen this glory, he replied, " Now, even now I have seen it ! Oh, what a glory is that—a glory which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into man's heart to conceive ! This glory have I seen." Shortly after he said, " Now have I overcome." These were his last words.

should become blessed occupants with Thee in the many mansions in Thy Father's house in heaven, whither thou art gone to prepare a place for us. There shall we taste and see Thy glory (such is Thy will) which the Father has given Thee in the flesh of Thy brethren, and being changed into the likeness of Thy glorified body, we shall for ever behold the glories of Thy blissful life. O Lord, we pray Thee, enlarge our heart, that we may be able to understand the glory of our high calling; make our eye single, that we may see and know the cause of such glory being imparted to us where it alone consists—in the counsel of eternal love with which the Father loved Thee before the foundation of the world, and hath sent Thee that we may live through Thee and be glorified in Thee. As truly as the Father hath from eternity loved Thee, doth He love Thy Church, and crowns with heavenly honour the joint-heirs of Thy glory! Help us, blessed Lord, firmly to believe this, and with our whole heart to cling to the sure promise which is given to us in this Thy high-priestly desire: "*Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me, for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.*" *

Ver. 25, 26. "*O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. I have declared unto them Thy name, and*

* "Hear this mighty word—I will, the Saviour says; not—I pray. This was the counsel adopted between the Father and the Son in the depths of eternity; this was the high end of the incarnation and death of the great Surety, that sinners should be saved, and children of damnation might be brought back to their original glory. Therefore the Saviour says, This is My will, for Thou hast loved Me before the world was. In the deep recesses of eternity, in the relation of love which exists between Me and Thee, in the inmost being of the Godhead, the salvation of sinners now rests as a right; therefore I will it! Thus the Saviour, in His prayer, looks into the depths of eternity both backwards and forwards. Thus His intercession reaches on into the time when the Shepherd will feed His sheep in heavenly pastures, and lead them forth beside the waters of eternal life. They shall behold His glory! Who can know what will befall him then?" (Hoffacker.)

will declare it : that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

It is Thy will, O Lord, that Thy people should behold Thy glory, and Thou dost confess, to our great comfort, that this Thy gracious will is founded on Thy Father's *righteousness*. Ah, without Thee, that word, the *righteousness* of God, can cause us nothing but dread ; but for Thy sake, Thou great Mediator, and with Thee, it is a word full of sweetness, and the immoveable stay of our souls.* We thank Thee with joy that Thou hast taught us to know the true God, the holy and righteous One, as the world does not know Him, but as Thou, O eternal Son of God, knowest Him, as the *righteous Father*, who has sent Thee to be the propitiation for our sins. Thou art now about to cross the brook Cedron, to enter the scene of Thy holy passion, that Thou mayest glorify Thy holy Father as the *righteous Father*, who has appointed Thee to be the mercy-seat for lost sinners ; that so, on the one hand, all who believe on Thee may receive the forgiveness of their sin, for which Thou hast made atonement by Thy innocent and precious blood, but that, on the other hand, to the world which rejects Thy sacrifice, their sin may be retained unto the righteous judgment. We thank Thee, gracious Shepherd, that Thou hast by Thy voice, gathered together Thy band of apostles, the men first chosen out of a world which knows not Thee nor Thy Father ; and that Thou hast made them confessors of Thy precious name of Father, that through their word many might believe in Thee, and cry, Abba, Father! in joyful union with Thee. With true shepherd faithfulness Thou hast kept Thy word, and

* "For each one, according to his share, there is nothing more refreshing or more establishing to spiritual peace than to be able to repeat after his Saviour, *Righteous Father*—i.e., to be able to see that the death of his flesh, the life of his spirit, the abolishing of sin, the service of the living God, the appointment which separates us from the world and its pleasure, but gives us in return the glory of being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ—to be able, I say, cordially to embrace the conviction that it is all of it founded on the righteousness of God " (*Rieger.*)

Thou wilt keep it until the glorious consummation of Thy flock, that Thou mayest still evermore continue to declare Thy Father's name ; for the Comforter is at hand, the Spirit of Truth, waiting diligently to perform His office of guiding Thy disciples into the whole truth of the declaration which Thou, the Son, hast made of the Father. May we, therefore, yield up our hearts for the Holy Spirit to work there without let or hindrance, that He may glorify Thee, O Lord Jesus, in us, and penetrate our hearts with a real, living knowledge of the Truth ; then shall we every day enter more fully into the blessed experience of the glory which is given to us, the open manifestation of which Thou dost hold out before us, and we shall be blessed with the blessing of Thy intercession ; *that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them.*"

The Capture.

CHAPTER XVIII. 1-12.

THE Lord has just been offering up His high-priestly prayer And by this prayer His soul has ceased to be troubled, and become clear as the sun. For a brief moment He sought in the *taste* and *feeling* of that brightness and glory which belonged to Him as the eternal Son of the eternal Father, rest and repose. Something similar happened to Him now as upon the Mount of Transfiguration. Now also was He afresh clothed upon by the power of His Godhead, that He might be able to endure and overcome in that hour of darkness (Luke xxii. 53), when He should experience all the suffering described in the 22d Psalm ; when all sense of His Sonship, all feeling of His Father's good pleasure in Him should be withdrawn from the soul.

Ver. 1, 2. "*When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place; for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples.*"

How must the disciples have felt strengthened by the Lord's prayer for them ! In His presence they felt as sheltered and safe as chickens under the wings of the hen. As yet their souls were oppressed by no foreboding concerning the troubles and offences of the night which had now begun. Thus they went with Him over the brook Cedron, the dark brook in the deep valley, over which David also once passed in the hour of his

deepest misery (2 Sam. xv. 23); and came to the district of Gethsemane (olive-press), at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Near it was a garden, well known to them—even to Judas—for often had they been wont to assemble there with their Master. It was the place of repose to which they were wont to retreat out of Jerusalem. But on this night there was no place of rest prepared for them here. Christ was now entering the field of conflict, to struggle and to conquer in the suffering of immeasurable woes, to bruise the head of the serpent, and to receive in His heel the serpent's bite.

Ver. 3. "*Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*"

Christ, after enduring great anguish and the pains of death in His soul, now yields up His body also to suffering and shame. All that we have sinned, both with soul and body, was laid upon Him, and for it all He atoned, in order that we might be redeemed and sanctified wholly, both in soul and body. After presenting Himself at the bar of His heavenly Father, and receiving from His Father's hand the cup of the sentence of death, He now steps forward in silent majesty to the spiritual and secular tribunal of men; the *injustice* of Pilate and the high-priests could have had no power against Him, if the Father's *justice* had not laid upon His Son's shoulders the burden of suffering. That which, in to-day's reading, we should above all things embrace with our hearts, is the image of Christ as He stands before us in the power of that word of His: "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John x. 18). Bound by the power of His love for us sinners, Christ went forward into the arms of death in obedience to His Father's command. This power of love was the chain which bound Him: without it no power of the world would have been able to bind Him.

Judas is the first who comes before us. During this night, whilst Peter and the sons of Zebedee were sleeping, Judas was watching (Luke xvi. 8). The other three Evangelists here again remind us that Judas was "*one of the twelve*," in order that we may never forget what a disciple of Christ can become, if he is not faithful but gives the rein to his sinful nature. And the same devil which devoured Judas is going about even now. "What has ever taken place on earth more dreadful than this? Judas was called by Christ to be an Apostle that he might lead the multitude of the nations to faith in Christ that they might be saved through Him; but behold! he leads the multitude hither, that they may destroy Jesus, and fetches from Him for himself eternal condemnation." (Brenz.) Let us also note what J. Gerhard says: "Judas's betrayal of Jesus should arm us against, and make us invulnerable to, the great offences which are caused in the Church by the presence of false brethren. Like him, apostates, even now, become the most violent and most poisonous of all enemies to the truth; they become the advance-guard of the other enemies of Christ, in order that they may thereby wash out the disgrace of their apostacy, and restore again in the eyes of men the faith and honour which they have broken with God. Now when we see such things happen, and behold men rising from our own midst who teach false doctrine, drawing away disciples after them (Acts xx. 30), let us say with Augustine, 'I am a man, living amongst men; and must not take it upon me to require that my house should be better than Noah's ark, wherein, though it contained but eight, yet of that eight there was one who was ungodly; or than Abraham's house, in which the command was given, Drive out the bondwoman and her son; or than Jacob's house, in which the son defiled the father's bed; or than David's house, whose son rebelled against him; or better than the little company of our Lord Jesus Christ's associates, in which eleven pious men endured the betrayer and thief Judas.'"

Judas was in advance of the multitude who were come out

against Jesus; he was the track-hound amongst the pack of dogs who were about to encompass the Saviour (Ps. xxii. 17). The devil led him, and he led the lower spirits. When the world desires to inflict right bitter suffering upon Christ, it makes use of apostate Christians. What a sight must that have been for the disciples, when they saw him who had hitherto been their companion approaching towards them *thus*! It was a sight which Peter, at least, never forgot. (See Acts i. 16.) They now saw accomplishing their Lord's "Verily, verily!"

The high-priests and pharisees, after the fashion of wicked men, who "flee when no man pursueth" (Prov. xxviii. 1), feared resistance on the part of the Lord and his disciples; therefore they had not only given Judas their band of servants, but had likewise added a number of Roman soldiers from the *Band*, *i.e.*, the cohort stationed at Jerusalem. They themselves were following at a distance, and drew near when the Lord was bound (Luke xxii. 52). Besides all these, there was also advancing a crowd of people, who had been stirred up by the elders. Armed with swords and staves, this multitude entered the garden; with torches and lanterns they came, fearing lest Christ should hide Himself among the olive trees of the garden. "The eternal Light had so far hidden itself in our flesh and blood, that it was sought for with lanterns and torches, when it was about to be killed by the darkness." (Augustine.)

Ver. 4. "*Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?*"

The armed multitude had not observed the kiss with which Judas had betrayed the Lord. With a sense of shame the betrayer had sneaked back into their midst. It needed thus to be, for the Lord Himself was to come forth to meet them, and to deliver Himself up into their hands. (Comp. the similar passage in chap. xiii. 1, &c.) He knew that, besides fresh distresses of soul there awaited Him also bodily tortures, bonds, blows, scourges, wounds, and the form of capital punishment, the most shameful and the most suffering. Knowing all this, He was now of His

own will going to meet his tormentors, thus here, too, fulfilling the word: "Behold, I come—I delight to do Thy will, O God" (Ps. xl. 8, 9), in order that He might sanctify us through the sacrifice of His willing obedience. Yet, it was to be emphatically set forth before the eyes of all—Judas as well—that no man had power to bind this Jesus, or to lead Him away to death, unless *He Himself should lay down His life*.

"*Whom seek ye?*" saith He to them. How this question must have struck home to the hearts of John and Andrew! Once they had sought in Jesus of Nazareth the Lamb of God, and then they were met by Jesus' question, "What seek ye?" (John i. 38);—now, Jesus of Nazareth is sought by those who are about to lead the Lamb of God to the place of slaughter.

Ver. 5, 6. "*They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon, then, as He had said unto them I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground.*"

From the Lord's word, "I AM HE!" there streamed forth a ray of that unapproachable light, whose fulness was hid in this Jesus of Nazareth. *They went backward and fell to the ground*, Judas with them. Ambrose says, "Not to defend Thyself didst Thou do this, but to convince the arrogance of men that it had no power at all against Thee, except so far as it received power from Thee;" and *Luther*: "When Christ says, *I am He!* we should consider what sort of an *I* this is, who this august Person is that says it; and wherefore he says it. It is the true Son of God who thus speaks. If, then, he can, by this one *word*, strike down these harnessed and armed men, what could He not effect if He had willed to use His hand! As if He would say to them, If I do it not, if it is not of My own free will that I suffer it, ye would be forced to leave Me uncaptured and unbound. Therefore we should here gaze into His heart, and see with what obedience to His Father, and with what kindness to us, He gives Himself up." See, here is the Lamb of God and the Lion of God! In the

hours of His deepest humiliation there shine forth, from His lowly form, some rays of His Majesty, for the strengthening of our faith. (Comp. Luke ii. 9.) “But not only does He confess Himself very God, but as the incarnate Jesus as well. I am He! namely, the Jesus who must suffer for the sin of the world, who must be mocked, spitted on, crowned with thorns, crucified, and buried. Oh, none of *us* should have liked to have been Jesus at such a price as this, for we are vain and earthly. It is Jesus’ will, however, to be Jesus wholly and entirely, and to continue so, even in face of the deepest suffering. Thus is He true to Himself, and ever remains the same.” (Diedrich.)

What will it be on that day, when the sign of the Son of Man shall again call forth, *I am He!* to all who dwell throughout the world? “What will He do who is coming *to judge*, if He thus wrought when He *was being judged*? What will be His power when He comes to *rule*, if such power was His when He came to *die*?” (Augustine.) Then shall *all* fall on their knees (Phil. ii. 10); some, like Judas and his multitude, will go backward and drop to the ground; others will fall down on their faces before Him and worship. Yes, He who has sat down at the right hand of God, rules even now in the midst of his enemies (Ps. cx. 2); and His mighty “*I am He!*” casts them to the ground before Him, at the very time when they appear to have Him under their feet. “He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked” (Isa. xi. 4). But blessed, on the other hand, are they who, like Paul, allow themselves to be overcome when the word of the Lord strikes home to their hearts: “I am Jesus, whom thou hast persecuted!” To such the gracious friendly cry, “*I am He!*” will be a sound full of sweet and tender comfort, as it was to the disciples on the Sea of Galilee, when their Lord cried out to them, “Be of good cheer! It is I, be not afraid!” (Mark vi. 50); and as it was again to these same disciples, when He appeared to them after His resurrection, and said, “Why are ye troubled? It is I, myself!” (Luke xxiv. 39.)

Ver. 7, 8, 9. "*Then asked He them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none.*"

The Lord, emptying Himself of the power of His Godhead, so far as regarded *His self-defence*, now performs another deed of wonder. He gives Himself up to the multitude to be bound; but His disciples, by His commanding word, He delivers from the hands of their enemies. To the thrice repeated question, "Whom seek ye?" the answer is again feebly heard, "*Jesus of Nazareth;*" for not one amongst them dares to say, "We seek Thee." Then He gives Himself into their hands, yet not without, at the same time, binding those hands, so that they shall not seize further than He chooses.

Luther says: "This other miracle of Christ's is very like the first, this His again answering: '*I have told you that I am He; if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way!*' He is alone, the blessed Lord has neither sword nor spear; on the other hand, against Him stands Judas with a great multitude armed with swords and staves. Under such circumstances, the poor Jesus, who was so utterly on the weaker side, ought of rights, to be giving good words and to use entreaties; but on the contrary He goes up to them ordering and commanding, bidding the Jews mind that they leave His disciples alone, and not touch one of them. For that is a stern word of His—*Let these go their way!* Neither is it uttered in vain, as we see; for they had no doubt set out with the intention to destroy the whole nest, both Master and disciples. But this word has such mighty power that their hands are tied, and they are forced to leave His disciples in peace; though indeed it was more than Peter deserved, who had drawn his sword, and was rushing in upon the multitude."

St. John says, that then was fulfilled the Lord's word: "*Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none*" (chap. xvii. 12);

and it is from his very heart that the disciple thus speaks. Well he knew that on this bodily preservation depended the preservation likewise of his soul and the souls of his fellow-disciples from being eternally lost; and it was this deliverance as well as the other which Christ contemplated in those words of His prayer. If the disciples had *now* been taken prisoners and put to death, their souls must have been lost, for this night they were all offended in Him; as yet they did not believe with *that* faith which believes and is not dismayed. St. John, then, here teaches us how we may comfort ourselves aright with the word and promise of God. Not one word which is spoken to us will fall to the ground; in perfect glory we shall see the fulfilment of every promise of God; it will be shown that we have a God who cannot lie (Tit. i. 2). But often His path is in the great waters where His footsteps are not known (Ps. lxxvii. 19). We should therefore diligently take heed to all that He noiselessly does, and in every trace of the revelation of His glory we should perceive a pledge of His faithfulness, which can never rest until all has been fulfilled which it has promised. This word, "*I have lost none of them,*" has its rich and daily fulfilment in the case of all His believers.

"In the words, "*If therefore ye seek ME, let THESE go their way!*" we see set forth the fruit of Christ's passion. As Isaiah says, "The chastisement lay upon *Him*, that *we* might have peace" (chap. liii. 5). The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep; His love seeketh not her own. Death, devil, and hell, the judgment and wrath of God—all have sought Christ, and we go free; for in Him we too have all suffered chastisement (2 Cor. v. 14), and God does not chastise twice. Therefore I possess an eternal consolation. "Let these go their way!" so runs my charter. Death and hell, ye must let me go free; for ye have sought Christ, and He has given Himself as a ransom for me: the snare is broken, and we are delivered.

Ver. 10, 11. "*Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*"

As they were approaching and laying hands on Jesus, and seizing Him, the disciples were struck with horror; they never imagined such a thing to be possible. And they said unto Him, "*Lord, shall we smite with the sword?*" (Luke xxii. 49). It was the presence of that Lord, whose word had just cast the multitude to the ground, which made them so bold. They will now keep their promise to Him like heroes. Peter, in order to regain what he had lost by neglecting to watch and to pray, springs forward—he waits not for the Lord's answer to the question put to Him by the disciples; for if they all should be so cowardly as to allow their Lord to be bound without offering any resistance, yet *he* will never suffer it!—he stretches forth his hand, and falling upon Malchus, who apparently was the first to lay hold of Jesus, cuts off his right ear. Poor Peter! It was of no use here to fight with the sword; nothing but believing and enduring availed here; and for this the heroic spirit sufficed him not. To smite with the sword! he could do that without collecting his thoughts in prayer; the courage of his natural man could effect *that*; but to possess and save his soul through patience (Luke xxi. 19), and to attack Satan, who desired to have him, with the sword of the Spirit, and thus to conquer! that was too much for him. Oh, let us cultivate a quiet spirit, and let us see to it that we do not seek to make up by carnal zeal for the courage which is wanting in us—the courage enabling us to confess and to endure!

This stroke of the sword caused more pain to Christ than to the wounded servant. G. K. Rieger says: "Peter imagined that if *he* did not now defend his Master, He must remain undefended; that all depended upon *him*; that if *he* kept his hand in his pocket it was all up with his Master; and that

there was no other resource left but that he should draw his sword and cleave here and there a head. Ah, good Peter, how many brethren hast thou left behind like thee! How many there are, and they are often very nice, good people, who imagine that if they had not been bearing up heaven upon their shoulders, it would long ago have fallen down on people's heads! There is still many an one who flatters himself that 'he is the man, that wisdom shall die with him' (Job xii. 2). But surely, God can have no need of any man's help. Instead of Peter the Lord had an angel, and not one angel only, but a legion of angels, ay, twelve legions of angels."

To the soldiers and servants, whose fury was aroused by Peter's assault, the Lord exclaims, "*Suffer ye thus far!*" and then, loosing His hands from the cords which bound them, He touched the ear of Malchus, and healed him. And as, for the moment, every one's attention was taken up by this miracle, the Lord seized the opportunity of saying His say to Peter. But that miracle of healing, mightily confirming as it did, the Lord's word, "*Put up again thy sword into thy sheath!*" proved a benefit to Peter, for it saved him from the hands of the vindictive multitude. Thus does His gentleness repair the evil which our folly has wrought. At the same time, the Lord gave proof that, though He was already taken prisoner, yet His majesty remained uncaptured, when He healed the servant's ear; and, as Leo the Great says, "formed again what He had before formed; behold, without delay, the flesh returns at the command of Him whose organization it is." Even had the people forgotten the former miracles of their King and Physician, yet this miracle, the only one, so far as we know, which He performed unsolicited, was well calculated to be a witness to them. But when, afterwards, Malchus bound with cords the hand which had just been employed in healing him, of whom, then, is he the type? Ask thyself, reader, this question.

The Lord further says to St. Peter. "*The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*" Wouldst thou dash the

cup out of my hand? Yes, that was what Peter desired to do; and the devil, too, would gladly have done the same. This is a repetition of what passed once before between the Saviour and Peter (Matt. xvi. 22). But the Saviour, in Gethsemane, could not *obtain deliverance by prayer* from this cup: should He, then, allow it to be taken out of His hand, when the Father had given it to Him to drink, and when it was *not possible* that it should pass from Him? Let us also be of the same mind with Christ Jesus; and in all our troubles, of which every drop is measured out, so that there is not one too many or too few, let us meet every temptation to impatience or deliverance with our Lord's question, "*The cup which my heavenly Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*" Ah, thou cup, which so dear and revered a hand presents to me! Ye adversities, be as great as ye will, ye will be only sweet to me. Hail to the cross! with my whole heart do I greet thee, thou welcome guest! I rejoice in the sufferings of which Christ deems me worthy in His fellowship, and in which I can prove to Him my humble obedience." (Forstmann.)

It was Christ's will to drink the Father's cup. If He had not so willed, no power could have forced the deadly cup to his lips.

Let us now consider the threefold form in which Christ here stands before us as the Saviour. (1) We see Him as the *innocent, unspotted Lamb* (1 Pet. i. 19), as our *High Priest*, who is *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners* (Heb. vii. 26). When He was judged, there was none found who could convict Him of a sin. They were therefore not *His* sins, but *our* sins, on account of which He behoved to suffer death. (2) We behold Him also as the *tortured Lamb*, upon whom was heaped unparalleled insult. To suffer shame and ignominy was an essential part of His office as Saviour; inasmuch as shame is a part of the wages of sin, which flatters us with haughtiness. Therefore it is that Scripture so often declares that Christ, as bearing what we deserved must be mocked and insulted, scorned, and reviled (Isa. liii. 3, 4, 6; Micah v. 1; Luke xviii. 32; Heb.

xii. 3 ; xiii. 13). (3) And finally, we behold Him as the *patient, silent* Lamb (Isa. liii. 7), as the Man who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; who, when He suffered, threatened not ; and therein has He left us an example, that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. ii. 21, etc.). And behold, this *innocent, shame-laden, patient* Lamb is *the Son of the living God!* He Himself confirms His Godhead with an oath ! May the Holy Ghost open our eyes, that we may rightly know and believingly appropriate the treasures of grace, which are opened for all poor sinners in these sufferings of the Son of God. He is wholly innocent, yet He is condemned : we are wholly guilty, yet we are acquitted, because *He* is condemned *for us*. He is worthy to receive honour and praise ; for to Him glory belongs, yet He is covered with shame. Shame and dishonour is our due, for we are sinners ; yet we are raised to honour, because *He* is put to shame *for us*. He, the Son of God, calmly and silently submits to the blows and buffetings of His enemies : we, worms of the ground, in our miserable pride, are quick to anger and revenge ; but His patience and endurance turns to our good, is given to us as ours, when we suffer for His name's sake ; for He was patient *for us*.

Peter's Denial.

CHAPTER XVIII. 12-27.

Ver. 12-14. *"Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people."*

The captured Saviour was led away to Annas first (ver. 13). This Annas had been formerly high priest, and now, as it would seem, filled the office of president of the Sanhedrim. In this, his official capacity, Annas desired to have a preliminary examination of Jesus, until the seventy-one members of the tribunal should assemble themselves. For the rest, Annas exactly resembled Caiaphas, whose father-in-law he was, as John on that account expressly remarks, and in so doing, is reminded of Caiaphas's Balaam-like declaration, who, during this year of grace, was high priest: "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John xi. 50). Annas also shared this opinion. He, in his godlessness, was constrained to help on the fulfilment of that decree of eternal love which the mouth of Caiaphas had disclosed, for Jesus, indeed, should die for the people; ay, and for all the lost children of God throughout the world, even for us.

We have already observed that Peter's threefold denial of Christ did not follow immediately one upon the other, but is woven into the particulars of Christ's examination before Annas

and Caiaphas. Whilst Jesus *as Christ* was suffering shame and scorn, Peter was denying Him, and would fain not be a Christian. The account runs, according to time and place, somewhat as follows: Peter had followed the Lord into the high-priest's palace. We learn from John, who was known unto Annas, that Annas, and his father-in-law Caiaphas, occupied *one* palace, though, doubtless, having different entrances. Peter, therefore, remained all the time in the same court, in the court where the fire of coals was burning (John xviii. 18, 25).

It was whilst the Lord was standing before Annas that Peter denied Him for the first time. When the bound Saviour was then led away to Caiaphas, and had to wait in the porch below until towards morning, Peter, all the while standing not far from Jesus, denied Him the second time, and an hour afterwards the third time. But the Lord turned and looked upon Peter just while He was being derided and buffeted by the men who held Him. When Peter went out and wept bitterly, Jesus was being led up before the Council, where He confessed He was Christ, the Son of God.

Ver. 15, 16. "*And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.*"

St. Matthew tells us (Matt. xxvi. 58) that Peter followed Jesus *afar off*. He, too, had forsaken Jesus in the garden, and fled; he felt ashamed of this; he would fain renew the blunted edge of his courage; he would fain show that he was not so weak as His Master took him to be, that he could make possible what the Lord had declared to be impossible.

Far better would it have been if he had gone into retirement, and on his bended knees had prayed that he might not fall into temptation, if he had said within himself, "Behold, one part of my Lord's prophecy has been fulfilled; I have

forsaken Him as He foretold ; the other part, my denial of Him, must surely lie at the door !” But he trusted himself too far, and mistook for pure love and faith what in reality was self-consciousness and wilfulness. His love to Christ was sullied by the impure desire, “Truly I will show Him what a Peter He possesses ! Not in vain shall He have named me *Rock* !” He was thirsting for a heroism to which as yet he was not called. He truly had not a very clear conscience as he was going ; he followed *afar off*, but he battled with this misgiving as if it were wrong, and plucked up courage. In the same way do we err, when we permit ourselves to be led by what we call our “good intentions,” and put out of sight God’s clear command. It was Peter’s not bowing with unreserved submission to the Lord’s word, “Thou canst not follow me now”—that, instead of remembering that word, he was thinking of nothing but his own rash word—that was the beginning of his fall. “If a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him” (John xi. 10) ; this was now being fulfilled in the case of the disciple who was robbing himself of the divine word, which ought to have been the light of his path.

Since he *desired* to rush into temptation, an opportunity for so doing was not wanting. Another disciple had joined him on the road, who was going in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. Without doubt this “other disciple” was John himself (comp. chap. xx. 2, 3). We find these two, Peter and John, together in some of the most memorable hours of their disciple-life, from that day when Andrew first led his brother Simon to the Lamb of God up to the time of the great mission-harvest in Samaria (Acts viii. 14). It has been thought that his acquaintance with the High Priest was but little honour to John ; but it was doubtless in his capacity as fisherman only that he knew him, and the woman who kept the door may have known him better than her master. John, surely, has no desire to boast of this distinguished acquaintance, he only mentions it in case it should seem as if the marvellous courage of his love

had opened for him the door. But it is a remarkable fact that whilst John, whose discipleship was known in the palace, was suffered to go out quite unmolested, his fellow-disciple Peter was sifted by Satan. We see from this, that through his own want of genuine true-heartedness Peter fell into bitter perplexity. John, the disciple, remains in the same place, and no harm befalls him—but Peter, when he should confess to being a disciple, loses courage altogether. Therefore John entered the palace in altogether a different frame of mind from Peter, namely, in simplicity and with no desire for display. Without the least suspicion he obtained entrance for Peter, perfectly unconscious that thereby he was doing the devil a pleasure. If our path is not clear according to God's word, then even our best friends cannot fail to become a snare to us.

Peter was now in the hall; it was not God who shut the door behind him, as with Noah in the ark, but the devil. He at once drew near to the crowd of servants who were standing round a fire of coals. It may not have been that he cared so much to warm himself, for as a fisherman he was accustomed to cold nights. An old father justly says: "He warmed himself by the fire, because love and faith had begun to grow cold within him;" and another says: "He had chilled himself whilst sleeping in Gethsemane." What he wished was to find out from the conversation of the servants *how it would end* with Jesus. Christ indeed had distinctly told him the issue of His passion, but of that he would not think; rather he hoped that the Lord would withdraw Himself by a miracle from the hands of His enemies. "Lord, this shall not be unto Thee!" (Matt. xvi. 22), was still the language of his heart; and when he saw that so it was to be to the Lord, then he was offended in Him. Besides, we cannot doubt that before his denial broke out in words, it had already crept into his thoughts and found a resting-place there, whilst warming himself by the fire. For believers do not fall suddenly in a moment; they *sink* before they *fall*. Amid the tumult he will have assumed an unconcerned mien, and have wiped from his eyes all his disciple's tears.

Ver. 17, 18. "*Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.*"

The doorkeeper's suspicions had been aroused on Peter's first entrance; she now approaches him, and eyeing him sharply, puts to him the question, "*Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?*" Peter is silent; ah, if only he had then immediately gone out! but he remains, and acts as if it were another man, and not him, that the maid had questioned. But she then pointedly addressing him says, "*Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee!*" (Matt. xxvi. 69, 71,) and at the same time, turning to the bystanders, affirms, "*This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth!*" It would not appear as if the maid wished to bring him into trouble; rather her words seem to mean: "It grieves me that thou, together with thy comrade John, should have attached thyself to so sorry a Master!" But this word sufficed to overthrow the disciple who had declared himself ready to go with Christ unto death. The waves of the sea sport at will with the anchorless ship. *He denied before them all*, and said, "*Woman, I know Him not.*" Yes, he would not even *know* the Lord, and pretends to be quite astonished that they should insult him by such questions: "*I know not what thou sayest;*" as if he would say: Thy question is wholly incomprehensible to me; I know nothing at all of the business which is going on here, nor whom it is all about. But no sooner was the word spoken, than he felt as it were stung to the heart. He feels that he can no longer brave it out before the servants; so step by step he slinks back along the colonnade, which opened out towards the street, that he may escape from the fatal place. At that moment the cock crew, and Peter understood the sign. But even then the hellish hunter, who is potently quick in pursuing fainting souls, was letting fly another arrow at him. In the ear of the agonised disciple there

again sounded the exclamation, though from another maid, "*This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth!*" (Matt. xxvi. 71.) And the doorkeeper chimed in, adhering to her first opinion. By these voices the crowing of the cock was overpowered. Bewildered he stands there, sifted like wheat in the sieve of Satan; he has wholly lost his self-possession; and when, after a time, a servant steps up and says to him, "*Thou also art one of them!*" he gives himself up for lost, returns to the fire, and mingles with the servants as if he would warm himself. But now they all set upon him and exclaim: "*Surely thou art one of them!* What business hast thou to be here with us?" And he denied again, and "*began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak*" (Mark xiv. 70, 71). He swears now; the old bad habits of his unconverted state break out afresh, and intentionally he speaks of his Saviour in the same slighting manner as the maid had done; *the man* he calls Him, *the fellow*. And He whom he thus designates is the same whom once he had honoured with the confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Quickly, indeed, does he go downwards in the path of sin.

And how did he employ the hour which he passed with the servants by the fire? It was a time for recollection granted to him by the long-suffering of God; his eyes should have been toward the Lord, that he would pluck his feet out of the net (Ps. xxv. 15); but Satan was busily employed in throwing dust into his eyes, in cutting off his retreat to repentance, and in preventing him from confessing, I have sinned. And Peter aided him in his work. He gave the lie to the shame and anguish which he felt at the first; he persuaded himself that a lie of necessity was allowable; how could his confession be of any use to the Lord? the servants had no right thus to question him, and he was not bound to confess before them the truth. But the false oath? Ah, *that* he had uttered in the anguish of his heart; if Jesus should require it, all should by-and-bye be made good—those rough soldiers were like madmen

to deal with. No doubt the devil was obliging enough to offer him some such fig-leaves of comfort!

There then he sits with fearless mien; ay, he even joins in the idle gossip of the servants, and speaks of Jesus, as of a "fellow," with whom he had no concern. Alas, he has become a Simon who no longer knows Jesus! And all this while Jesus stands very near to him, and is being mocked by his tormentors, and beaten with fists. This Peter sees, and yet not one cry of wounded love escapes him. He may perhaps have said to the servants, "What has the man done that he must suffer thus?" But the very thing which he meant should hide him, only served to make him known. His broad dialect betrayed him a Galilean. More vehemently than before he is fallen upon with the charge: "*Of a truth, this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean!*" (Luke xxii. 59.) "*Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee!*" (Matt. xxvi. 73.) And as if the devil, who was already sure of him, would fain mock him: "where then is thy courage, thou hero of the sword?" he makes a kinsman of Malchus turn to him and ask, "*Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?*" (John xviii. 26.) Peter at this moment was visibly protected by the word which Jesus had uttered, "Let these go their way;" for no man laid hands on him to avenge Malchus. But even that could no longer bring him to his senses. He swears again and *curses*: Let God punish him in such and such a manner, may he have no part in the kingdom of God, if he knows this Jesus. What must the soldiers have thought of this? First there was Judas, now Peter. What shame put upon Jesus! "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 33); under this sentence of the Righteous Judge Peter had now fallen. He had forfeited his eternal salvation, and had made his bed in hell. Already the devil was whispering, "Once forsworn, for ever lost!"

And now that Peter has fallen through Satan's sieve, and is

lying wholly overcome, let us pause and consider his fall. It is the deepest fall of a servant of God which Scripture records; and it sank especially deep into the heart of all four Evangelists; for even John, who in his history of the Passion, as well as elsewhere, passes over much that is recorded by his fellow evangelists, has not chosen to be silent here. Peter had never imagined that he could be such a sinner as he now had proved himself to be. True, three years ago he had called himself a "sinful man;" but he had long ceased, as he thought, to be so sinful as to be capable of denying his Lord with oaths and curses. Behold, then, it was *this good opinion of himself* which caused his fall. And in his fall there is held up before us a mirror, which clearly shows us, if only we do not refuse to see it, that our heart is a hot-bed for every sin, that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing. "Without the grace of God," says Augustine, "what is man other than what Peter was when he denied Christ?" Therefore examine thyself well and see whether thou hast still any confidence left in thine own self, whether thou imaginest thyself to be above committing such and such sins, whether thou art still trusting to thine own power to resist *any* temptation. If so, beware; Peter, he who was called *a rock*, was yet no match for the devil when he rested upon his own goodness; and wouldst *thou* cope with him? No, whenever it appears as if we, with our own nature and our own will, could accomplish any thing, as if we might venture to take our stand by this or that "fire of coals" belonging to the world,—whenever we are thus tempted, let Peter's fall frighten us. Whenever we have commenced a day without prayer and careful self-recollection, let Peter's fall be a terror to us. Whenever we imagine ourselves to be more advanced or stronger than our brethren, then let Peter's fall be a terror to us. Whenever we step out of the clear path which God's word and promise gives to us, and walk in paths where we have no sure word of God under our feet, then let Peter's fall be a warning and a terror to us. "Pass the time of your sojourning

here in fear" (1 Pet. i. 17); and, "Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you" (1 Pet. i. 13); both these exhortations should be impressed upon us with additional force by the fall of the man who uttered them. And when we have *once* wounded our conscience, and said yes to the tempter, then let Peter's second and third fall be a warning and a terror to us, lest we also allow ourselves to be dragged on from one sin to another; and let us follow Luther's advice, "When in the midst of sin, kneel down, and breathe forth from thy heart the prayer: Dear Father, forgive me this sin, and help me to free myself from it, that the devil may not throw me deeper in, and keep me there for ever!"

This fact should be deeply engraven in the hearts of believers, that when the devil had desired to sift Peter, he straightway tempted him to *deny Christ*. Behold, it is the devil's will and joy, when a believer does this or that to please the world, or because the world does it; when he is silent concerning this or that thing, and pretends that he knows not this Jesus. And if the wicked one have but so much as a finger of us, he will soon drag after it the whole body to himself; if we are ashamed of Christ and of His word in one single point, the heart becomes faint and barren, and we shall soon deny Him altogether. Since Christ's shame must be repeated again in His Church, therefore Peter's denial also is in manifold ways repeated, and the hearts of many are revealed. Then let each one of us humble himself before God, that He would take from us all half-heartedness and lukewarmness, and that He would give unto us a heart that seeks not to escape from fellowship with Christ's shame in His suffering members, but rather seeks it; and let us say with Ignatius: "What would praise advantage me, if he who praised me abused my Lord?" It is no trifling matter, for the sake of the name of Jesus, to be hated and scorned by the world; he who has not thoroughly experienced it, can hardly believe how strongly our ease-loving, world-loving flesh fights against it. But thou, Christian, who

art able to confess Christ and to follow Him in peace and quietness, perhaps even having honour paid thee because of thy piety, yet know that thou, too, even in thy closet, and wherever else thou art alone with thy Lord, art yet able to deny Him. *Every wilful sin committed by a believer is a denial of Christ in act and deed*; every time that thou livest to sin thou art in fact saying, though thy mouth be silent, "I know not Jesus Christ, in whom I should be dead to sin." Yes, for a disciple of Christ there is day by day no middle course: either he must deny *himself*, or he will deny *Christ*; either he must renounce his nature, or he will renounce Christ (Luke ix. 23, 24; xiv. 26).

In St. Luke we read: "*And immediately, while He yet spake, the cock crew;*" i. e., the second time. The cock interrupted Peter with his cry, and he was struck dumb. Who is He "that giveth songs in the night?" (Job xxxv. 10). Dost thou not know Him? Peter knew Him. But even this second cock-crowing would not wholly have aroused him from his lethargy of sin, nor have brought him to repentance, if something else had not been added to it. He would have thought, the cock crows to-night as it does every night; and so the Lord's word respecting the cock-crowing would have found no entrance into his heart—no morning would have risen upon his night, in spite of the cock's morning cry. But just then "*the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly*" (Luke xxii. 61, 62).

Christ before Pilate.

1. JESUS A KING.

CHAPTER XVIII. 28-38.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ was accompanied in His Passion by one revelation after another of the hearts of sinful men. It was what Simeon had prophesied (Luke ii. 35). The Lamb of God, bearing the guilt of the world and of the world's children, was surrounded by a company who were the representatives of sinful humanity. Therefore whilst we behold Him, suffering and bleeding for us, we should recognise, as in a mirror, *our own form* in those men by whom He is beset. For *their* nature is *our* nature. By the side of Jesus we see standing the company of high priests and elders, with Annas and Caiaphas at their head; and they set forth the extent to which the darkness of self-righteousness hardens man, so that with seeing eyes he yet sees not the glory of the only-begotten Son,—with hearing ears he yet hears not the voice of grace and truth. By the side of Jesus there also stand the people, to whom He had shown Himself as the King of Peace,—amongst whom He had walked, healing and doing good to all who were oppressed by the devil; and this people, who now cry, Crucify Him! set forth the giddy fleshly mind, which would fain enjoy God's bounty, whilst it refuses to offer to God that which is His due. There also, by His side, stand the heathen soldiers, smiting and deriding Him; in them we see displayed the rude fury of the natural man against whatever disturbs him in his dream: "Let us

eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!" Herod, too, stands by Him—we shall presently see what kind of worldliness it is which *he* sets forth. And lastly, the Twelve are standing by Him. One of their number, Judas, betrays Him, and afterwards hangs himself; in him we see what the bosom sin, which has been willingly fostered, can effect when it awakes; how it gnaws away the budding faith, and at length gives over to Satan for eternal destruction the heart which it has laid waste. Peter denies his Lord; in him is set forth the truth that before God our flesh and blood avails nought and can do nought. All the disciples fly in terror, thereby declaring the weakness and fear of the cross which cling even to those hearts which love the Lord.

And the Lord, how does He present Himself towards all these sinners? He is thirsting to save them; His infinite love is suing for their souls,—if only they would know Him to be a Saviour, to be *their* Saviour. Perhaps thou hast heard of the martyrs in Madagascar, how with burning love they invited their executioners to Christ, until pierced through by their spears: see in them the followers of Jesus Christ. Yes, the crucified Saviour is like that Eastern tree which moistens the axe which fells it with a sweet, odorous balsam. But what He wrought upon that company of sinners He also does upon ourselves; for He is the same Jesus now that He was then.

Ver. 28-31. "*Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment; and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this Man? They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spake, signifying what death He should die.*"

To that company of sinful men, which the history of the Passion pictures to us, that man belongs whose name will never be forgotten in Christendom—*Pontius Pilate*. The Evangelists, especially John, who had followed his beloved Lord even hither, give us a minute account of what transpired between Christ and Pilate. Even him Jesus Christ longs to win, bringing His kingly power to bear upon his soul; He seeks to make Pilate yield himself up to Him and to confess, "Thou art *my* King!" It is this fact which we should especially bear in mind whilst considering this part of the narrative. And Pilate does to a certain extent feel impressed by the glory of this King whom he had to judge; but he cannot make up his mind to decide *for Him*, and therefore he is driven to make his decision *against Him*. "He that is not with Me is against Me," the Lord says (Matt. xii. 30). In Pilate we see set forth the folly of those miserable men who try to *accommodate* betwixt Christ and the world—betwixt truth and falsehood—because they are not in real and entire earnest about truth; because they esteem Christ not worth their breaking with the world and their sin for Him. And this is the other thing which we should here consider; so consider it, that the contemplation of Pilate may make us search into our own breast, and with well-grounded fear of ourselves ask the Lord, "Lord, is it I?"

Pilate had now been for six years governor of Judea. This was Israel's time of grace, during which the Lord was walking amongst His people, and seeking the lost; whilst even some first-fruits from among the heathen had done homage to Zion's King. But in Pilate's palace there was little heed paid to the Prophet of Nazareth. True, the fame of Him had reached even Pilate (his wife, we know, had, in dreams, been concerned with Him); but yet the god whom he served, honour in this world, had hitherto left him neither time nor inclination to make any inquiries about Jesus. To-day, however, he *must* inquire concerning Him; to-day he must decide whether or no he will give his adhesion to the King whose kingdom is not of this world.

Early in the morning he is summoned from his palace, and a prisoner is placed before him, who has been brought thither by the Sanhedrim. This prisoner is Jesus. Pilate soon perceives what the case is about,—that it is a matter of belief, or as he would call it, of superstition, from which he will fain keep himself clear. Therefore, half in derision, half in anger, he asks the Jews, “What accusation bring ye against this Man?” But the high priests, perceiving the scorn with which this Roman looked upon all cases that concerned their faith, boldly make answer, “It is not without consideration that we have delivered Him up to thee. He belongs to thy jurisdiction, for He is a *malefactor!*” “Let the question be asked, whether He is a malefactor, and the question shall be answered by those delivered from unclean spirits, by healed paralytics, by cleansed lepers, by men hearing and talking who once were deaf and dumb, by men who once were blind and now see, by men raised from the dead; and, what is more than all, by fools who have been made wise unto the kingdom of heaven. Ay! all these shall answer whether or no Jesus is a malefactor. But they were only fulfilling what Jesus himself had before uttered through the Psalmist: They reward me evil for good” (Ps. xxxv. 12). (Augustine.)

But Jesus stood before the governor (Matt. xxvii. 11); the future Judge of quick and dead, before this His earthly judge. He stood there, a King in bonds. Pilate beheld Him, and his impression that this was no malefactor was legible on his countenance. Then began the Lord’s accusers to bring forward the accusations upon which they had previously agreed. He had confessed that He was Christ; therefore they represent Him to the governor as a rebel, who had called himself an *anointed King*; and thereto add the lie, that He seduced the people, and refused to pay tribute to the Emperor. They make out the Lord to be just the kind of Messiah which they, in their carnal minds, were hoping for; and in this character they deliver Him up to the

heathen Pilate. But, as we have already said, Pilate would fain have nothing to do with this business. He had very soon perceived that Jesus was no rebel, as they had accused Him of being—indeed the Jews would hardly have delivered up a rebel to Pilate—and he therefore declines the disagreeable business of pronouncing sentence upon Him, with the words, "*Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law!*" In vain; he should have decided determinately either for or against this Jesus. For the Jews answered Him: "We have already *judged* Him; but we dare not *put Him to death*; it is not lawful for us to *put any man to death*." Thus Pilate now hears that they desire him to pronounce a sentence of *death*. The Lord Jesus is delivered into his hand, and, however much He may resist, yet he must execute his office, and enquire more closely into the charge brought against this "malefactor."

And here, when we see Jesus, in His deepest humiliation, subject to the sentence of a heathen judge, St. John refers us once more to the Father's counsel, where he says, that it behoved the Lord to be put to death, not by the Jews, but by the Romans, *that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spake, signifying what death He should die*. Comp. Matt. xx. 19, xxvi. 2; John iii. 14, viii. 28, xii. 32. Jesus was to be *crucified* to the accursed tree; but crucifixion was a Roman manner of execution. The Lord was not to be *stoned*, according to the Jewish custom; for His holy corpse must be preserved from all mutilation (John xix. 36). "This remark St. John makes for the strengthening of our faith, and to show us how wisely everything was ordered by the counsel of God under such complicated circumstances. His enemies dared not go one step further than Divine Providence gave them leave to go. They dared not do what they would, but throughout the whole trial of Christ everything was ordered by God's decree, determined long before. But this very Providence, which watched over our blessed Saviour, from His birth up to His death, will also watch over us in our hours of life and death, if only we yield ourselves

wholly up to it, and commit all our ways to God alone." (Rambach.)

Before we follow Pilate to his private interview with the Lord, let us cast a look into the mirror which in him is held up to our view. Have we kept ourselves hitherto from allowing the question to come before us, What think ye of Christ? Has every imaginable thing besides been of importance to us except this: who is Christ, and what is He *to us*? I will not speak of the distinguished men of the world, and so-called people of refinement; that among them Pilate has more followers than Christ, is, alas! certain. But see, thou "believest," i.e., thou dost not deny that Christ is the Lamb of God, who bears the sin of the world, and the King, to whom is given for His kingdom the world which He has redeemed; yet thou art living as if thou didst not belong to this redeemed world, to this kingdom; thou art living as if this King did not reign upon earth, but in the moon; and when He presses in upon thee with His presence, and when His word lays hold upon thee, so that thou dost feel it; when one of His living members, one who really prays, comes across thee, whose life, even louder than his word, puts to thee the question, "Dost thou also hope to be saved?" or when this question from a death-bed penetrates thy heart, then thou art frightened; then thou wouldest gladly avoid answering either yes or no, for thy courage fails thee to say *Yes*, and to say *No* would bring upon thee unquiet nights; thou wouldest rather, therefore, say nothing at all; thou wilt not let the Lord Jesus draw near to thee, yet thou wilt not exactly turn thy back upon Him. If thou hast learnt anything of the spirit of the world as it now displays itself, thou wilt then pretend to be annoyed by such questions, and wilt say,—We must not talk much concerning these holy things; let every one have his faith for himself, &c.

Now know this, thou new Pilate, thou wilt not always succeed in hiding thyself from thy Saviour; thou must stand before Him. The effect of His kingly majesty is such that

none can escape from Him. Whither wilt thou go from His Spirit, or whither wilt thou flee from His presence? If thou ascendest to heaven—drawest near to the company of them who call upon and proclaim His name—He is there, in the glory of His grace; if thou makest thy bed in hell—seekest rest in the world which scorns and persecutes Him—behold, He is there also, in the glory of His judgments. He is a King, whose right hand reaches everywhere, and stretches itself out to every person. *To each one there comes the Pilate's hour, in which he must make his decision, either for or against Christ.*

Ver. 33-35. "*Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast thou done?*"

Pilate entered again into the judgment hall. Let us imagine to ourselves this scene. In an open space in front of the palace, called Gabbatha, or Pavement, stood the judgment seat, upon which the governor sat when transacting business with the Jews. A colonnade ran from the place Gabbatha to the court of the palace, which was lined with soldiers. To this court Pilate now returned, and *ordered Jesus to be brought before him.* The sight of the Lord had indeed touched his heart; if he had remained wholly indifferent to the accused—if he had found sport in this mournful representation of a king who wore chains of iron instead of chains of gold—he would have examined Him outside from the judgment seat, without taking any further trouble. The two, then, now stand opposite each other. Pilate asks, "*Art Thou the King of the Jews?*" Jesus might have simply answered *Yes*; for He was the King of the Jews. And He did answer *Yes*, as the three first Evangelists, summing up the substance of His answer, tell us. But John, whose listening ear might have caught the

Lord's words through the colonnade, relates minutely *how* He answered Yes. He first answered Pilate by another question : "*Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?*" What led our Lord to put this question? He had stood indeed before the governor, and had heard when the Jews accused Him of calling Himself a King; and Pilate might easily have answered, "Why dost thou ask me this? Surely Thou knowest that others have told me that Thou wouldest fain be a king!" It has been thought that the Lord's question was intended to bring out the difference between the word *king* in the mouth of a *heathen* and in the mouth of a *Jew*. If Pilate (it is said) had asked of himself, "*Art Thou the King of the Jews?*" he would naturally mean thereby a *worldly* king, and the Lord must have answered him No; but if he had asked the question because the Jews had spoken to him of Jesus' kingship, then his question, although unknowingly to himself, would concern the kingly office of the *Messiah*, and to this the Lord's answer would be Yes. This explanation is partly true; yet it does not entirely exhaust the meaning of the Lord's question, and it does not entirely accord with the connexion. For first, it does not make it clear why the Lord should ask Pilate something, the answer to which was already to be found in the accusation of the Jews; but secondly, the Jews designedly used the name *King* in the sense in which the heathen Pilate understood it, and whether he had said this thing *of himself*, or because *others had told him*, there was no *Either*—and *Or*,—it was the same thing: the Lord Christ would in both cases have had the same ground for adding as He did, "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" We think, on the contrary, that the Lord's question will become plain to us, if we reflect that it was not on *His own* account, but on *Pilate's*, that He put it; that He looked upon Pilate not as a mere legal investigation-machine, but as a man, whose poor lost soul He was, by virtue of His love, longing to win—a love which cannot help seeking every poor lost one whom it comes near.

Therefore it is as if His question ran thus: "Sayest thou this thing of thyself? Pilate, hast thou thyself, has thine heart no interest in this question? Wouldst thou indeed know whether I am a King, and what sort of a King I am? Oh, that thou wert thyself asking the question! But is it not so, that thou sayest this only because others have told it thee of Me? Thy question is only for *them*, not for *thyself*; only as governor thou dost ask it, not as Pilate? Is it not so, that thou only carest to learn whether I may be dangerous to thy Emperor, and not, whether I may be a Deliverer to thy soul?" And Pilate really did feel something of the earnest, eager love which was seeking him personally in these words; but he hastens to escape from it; he thrusts it from him; and answers with all the pride of a Roman, "*Am I a Jew?*" What dost Thou concern *me*, that I should of *myself* ask after Thee? "*Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me.*" My question is an official question, nothing more; delay me not—"what hast thou done?" What hast thou done that thine own people, and even its rulers, accuse thee of being a rebel?

What hast Thou done? Oh, what an answer might Christ have then given! The world, says St. John, would not contain the books, if everything were written which He has done. Pause, dear Christian, and answer for thy Lord. Thou knowest, surely, what He has done *for thee*? Behold, thou mayest not say: "Am I a Jew?" for thou art really His kinsman, thou dost belong, through thy baptism, to His own people. But what a woful thing it is, that, for all that, there is so many a Christian, who is as much a stranger to the Lord Jesus as Pilate was; who only knows something of Him from hearsay, but who neither has, nor desires to have, any experimental acquaintance with him! How sad it is, that the distinguished men of the world who now call science their god, should deem it a disgrace to know nothing but the crucified Christ, and that there should be found men (would that they were heathen!) who, to their preacher's question: "What has Christ then done, that He was

crucified?" make answer: "He must have done something or other!"

Ver. 36-38. "*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice. Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in Him no fault at all.*"

"What hast thou done?" Pilate asks, and the Lord answers: "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" As if He would say: "I have done nothing proper to a king, as *thou* usest the word *king*; what I have done and what I still am doing in My kingdom is altogether beyond the range of thy worldly judicature." If Christ's kingdom had been a kingdom like that of Rome, Pilate would then have had before his eyes a king in a car of triumph, instead of a king in bonds. As the Lord adds: "*If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants* (the legions of ministering angels) *fight. . . . But now is My kingdom not from hence.*" Not from *beneath* does Christ's kingdom spring, but from *above* (John viii. 23). The weapon of His kingdom is not the sword, but the word and the Holy Ghost, and His combatants conquer not by blows and violence, but by sufferings and endurance—even as He did; His kingdom's palaces are no castles but the hearts of men, in whom He dwells through faith; the good things of His kingdom consist not of gold, nor of outward peace and prosperity, but of forgiveness of sins, of peace with God, of righteousness and eternal life; the adornment of His kingdom consists not in honour and parade before men, but in the despised form of the cross, under which His kingdom flourishes and blossoms; His kingdom embraces

not some or many provinces, but the whole circle of the world ; its term of duration is not hundreds or thousands of years, but to all eternity. It is an inexhaustible comfort to the Church of Christ that the kingdom of their king is not of this world ; and those are days of prosperity to the Church, in which she most clearly remembers her heavenly origin, and frees herself from all those circumstances of pomp which lower her into a kingdom of this world. Let us hold fast by the confession of our king : "*My kingdom is not of this world,*" and let us recognise the holy calling given to the Church, the possessor and dispenser of the truth. When St. Paul is exhorting Timothy to fight the good fight of faith, and to hold fast by sound doctrine, he reminds him of *the good confession which Jesus Christ witnessed before Pontius Pilate* (1 Tim. vi. 13); with that confession shall Timothy comfort himself, and feel sure of victory in every conflict. "We have then an eternal, almighty King, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who delivers us from the power of the devil and from sin, and from eternal death, not from bodily death, for here on earth we must suffer and die, even as our King Himself has suffered and died. He who knows the fashion of this King and the nature of His kingdom, will willingly submit to the cross, for he lays hold on the consolation, that although here it must be borne in suffering, yet that in eternity it will be his joy and glory. This it is that gives courage to the Christian, even in the midst of temptation and death. Christ the King of glory lets thy body and goods, life and everything, come into peril ; there thou shouldest learn and firmly believe that the reason is, that His kingdom is not of this world. For behold thy King, the Lord Christ Himself ! how fares it with Him ? With what pomp does He appear ? What state does He keep ? Nothing of the sort is to be seen ; we only behold Him suffering, allowing Himself to be mocked and scorned, and shamefully dying. He has only one single trifle that He governs with, namely, the *witness of the truth* ; that is, the holy Gospel. Through this He gives the Holy Spirit into our

hearts, forgives sin, and bestows the hope of eternal life, but all this only in faith and in the word; we see it not; we touch it not; it comes not to our hand, we possess it only in hope. But when the kingdom of this world shall come to an end, and we shall no longer be upon earth, then shall be made manifest His kingdom and glory, and we shall with Him live for ever and reign over all in heaven and in earth." (Luther.) To this St. Paul also directs Timothy's thoughts (ver. 15), immediately after the passage we have just quoted, and in expectation of it, let us lift up our heads with renewed courage, when the time seems long to us of our sojourn in this old world, where our King's glory and our own is hidden under the veil of shame and suffering. King Francis of Navarre, in his dying hour, several times requested this word of the King of Heaven to be repeated to Him: "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" Well for him who belongs to the kingdom which endures for ever, and which, when the world and the lust thereof shall have passed away, will shine forth in all the greater splendour!

But in this word of the Lord, "*My kingdom is not of this world,*" there is also contained for His servants a mission to the world; for it is His will that this world, of which He is not, but which is *of Him*, created and sustained by Him, should be filled with His glory; that from being a workshop of the devil, it should be changed into a tabernacle of God. And it is our duty to help Him in this work of conquering the world. We are not to put ourselves out of sight, but to shine as lights in the world in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Phil. ii. 15); we should not desire to be secluded Christians, each one on his own account following his own fashion, but as the *Church*, as the *congregation* of Christ, in real *unity* of faith, we should bear witness to the glory which He has given us, in order that the world may believe and know that He has a kingdom upon earth (John xvii. 21, 23); we must not please ourselves, but even if the world leave *us* in peace, we must let *the world* have no peace, until conquered by Christ's love, or

overpowered by His judgments, it lies at His feet; for this, as good soldiers of Christ, we must fight, and pray, and bear witness, that *His kingdom may come*, that all who will allow themselves to be saved may be transported out of this world into His blessed kingdom, until at length shall resound that song of triumph, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever," when the purified world shall be glorified into the new heavens and the new earth, in the everlasting kingdom of our God and of the Lamb.

This path has Christ trod before us. Behold, here before Pilate He shows Himself to be the King whose kingdom is not of this world, but whose love desires to change this world into His kingdom. He will not have His servants fight that He should not be delivered to the Jew; but He is now fighting that the soul of Pilate may be delivered to Him, that this child of the world might enter into His kingdom and be saved. This He is *doing* whilst Pilate is asking Him, "*What hast thou done?*" But Pilate looks at Him in astonishment. Three times had "this man" spoken of *His kingdom*; and indeed there was something *kingly* in His manner of speaking which overawed the Roman. What? Was it possible that there was another kingdom besides that one whose honour was his idol? another world besides this world? another happiness different from that which he was longing for, a happiness which this world's misfortunes have no power to destroy? Surely such questions as these must have been pressing upon the governor. With suppressed uneasiness he exclaimed, "*Art thou a King then?*"

Jesus answered, "*Thou sayest it, I AM A KING!*" And as He had before been declaring what His kingdom was *not*, so He now declares what kind of a kingdom it is, and what the kingly functions are which He performs in this kingdom: "*To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.*" Then Christ is a King of

Truth. Should not Pilate have desired to behold a King of Truth, a witness whose possession the truth is, in the midst of the fruitless search which the heathen world was making after the true God? Christ lays hold of him on that point, where there might have been a holdfast, when He offers to him for his knowledge and acceptance that after which so many heathen were groping and sighing, *the truth*. To a Jew He might perhaps have said, *salvation*; to the heathen Pilate He holds out salvation as an object of attraction under the form of the truth. In Him has the truth appeared. He is Himself *the truth* (John xiv. 16). He is *full of Grace and Truth* (chap. i. 14); as the only begotten Son of God, He is *essential*, substantial Truth, the express image of God's person. Scripture calls God *true*, because he truly, and for ever, *is* what He *declares* Himself to be, because His holy love is His blessed life; God's Truth and God's Holiness are one. Just so the Son of God. And He *bears witness* to the Truth, whose substance He Himself is ("I am one that bear witness of myself," John viii. 18; comp. chap. iii. 11, 32). He reveals the holy love of God towards men (chap. i. 18, xvii. 6), that God would deliver them from sin which is a lie, and rescue them from the power of the liar. This is the heavenly sum of that witness to the truth, which "the faithful and true Witness" has borne, that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that all who believe on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and so St. Paul declares, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." To reveal in *His own person* this saving truth, that God's holy love desires the redemption of sinners—for this purpose it was that Christ was *born* and became man, a *born* King of Truth (Matt. ii. 2); for this cause did *He come into the world*, of which (John xvi. 28) He is not; to this end did He live in the world, and preach, and work and suffer. Jesus, the Friend of souls, *bears witness* to that which our soul is *seeking* for; and His word would fain sound to us like the sweet accents of home. All men

are liars. Jesus bears witness to the truth, and brings near to us the Kingdom of Truth, of which He is the hereditary King.

He, then, is standing before Pilate, whose kingly office it is to satisfy the longing of the human heart after truth. But was there in Pilate any such longing? Had there been kindled in his soul, by what he had previously heard of Christ, and now by the impression which His holy presence made upon him, any longing for a clearer view respecting the eternal destiny of his immortal soul? Did he feel any inward drawing prompting to enquire of the King of Truth, "What must I do to be saved?" The Lord looks at him as if He would put to him the question, "Pilate, hast thou any desire for the truth?" and adds, "*He that is of the Truth heareth my voice.*" The citizens of my kingdom are, like Me, not of this world (chap. xvii. 14); they are of the Truth, born of God. With these words His seeking love shoots its last sharp arrow into Pilate's heart. This heathen required to be of the truth; that is, it was necessary that he should draw from the truth, which was now approaching him, a hearty desire for its knowledge, for then would he have heard and understood the voice of Jesus as being the voice of a King; then would he have been saved. The truth will first be loved, and then it will allow itself to be known; but it will not where there is no love. But this love to the truth springs not from ourselves; it is the gift of God; it is the Father's drawing to the Son; therefore the same thing, as the Lord expresses in the words, "*He that is of the Truth heareth My voice;*" is contained also in those other words of His: "He that is of God heareth God's words." Comp. also chap. iii. 21, vii. 17. Not to oppose, not to turn aside, when the truth knocks at the heart, and God's love sues for love in return, that alone is man's business, and to this Pilate was now called. And what does he do?

He says, "*What is truth?*" Does he mean this as an *enquiry*? Does he ask Christ this, desiring an answer from Him? No; he expects no answer; for, "*when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews.*" Therefore his word, "*What is truth,*" is

no question, but an exclamation ; it springs not from a desire to know the truth, but rather from a doubt whether there is any such thing as truth at all. "He imagined Christ's Kingdom to be a kingdom such as is *acted* in a comedy, or any other game." (Luther.) And this Pilate exclaims, in the very face of the King of Truth, turning his back upon Him ; the bright Sun is shining upon him, but he holds his hands before his eyes, and says, It is quite dark !

Now we know how it stands with this man. He is *not* of the truth. The secret sighing of his soul after a sure support, and an eternal consolation, he had silenced, by adopting the confession of one of his heathen contemporaries : "Only this is certain, that there is nothing which is certain." And this inward void, which could not but make him miserable, he had filled up with the honour which belonged to him as governor ; his life was being spent and lost in the kingdom of this world. Truth !—what profit would it bring ? That may be seen by this "king !" As Luther strikingly explains Pilate's exclamation : "Oh, if it is truth that thou makest thy concern, thou art certainly lost !" Such was Pilate's state, when his hour of grace struck, when Christ visited him. But why does he *remain* as he was ? Why does he not wake to-day out of his heavy dream when the hand of the King of Heaven is seeking to rouse him ? And if he *was* waking up—for surely, fast as his sleep was, he must have had *some* consciousness of the nearness of this king—why does he wilfully close his eyes again ? Why does he utter no cry of sorrow that he believes in nothing ? Why does he not fall down before the Lord calling out : "Help thou mine unbelief !" Why does he not complain : "Alas, what am I, that I have never known the truth !" but instead of that he turns away with indifference, coolly shrugs his shoulders, and says : "What is *truth* ?" Behold ! he keeps down the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. i. 18) ; he *flees from the truth* which is knocking at his heart, because he is conscious that in its light his evil deeds would be reproved (John iii. 20) ; he *loves darkness* rather than

light, therefore he tries to escape from the light, and will have it that it gives no light. The effect of a man's fleeing from the truth is to make him doubt whether God's word be truth. I once saw a signet-ring on which was engraven a beautiful female form, with the inscription under: "Truth." But the face was covered with a veil, over which were the words: "We ourselves weave the veil." The ring might have served for the crest of Pilate.

What is truth? The spirit of our time wears upon its brow this Pilate-mark. The witnesses of the truth speak to it as to one in a slumber—"when they have told their tale, he will say: What is the matter?" (Ecclus. xxii. 8.) The voice of the King of Truth sounds aloud in His Church; the word of God, which is truth (John xvii. 17), runs swiftly, and is given with multitudes of preachers; but as Christ once "suffered under Pontius Pilate, so at the present day He suffers over again under this Pilate-conformed world, which closes its eyes and says: "*That we know nothing about!*" Ah, world, thou hypocrite, thou art wilfully determined not to know what thou pretendest not to be able to know! Yes, wretched man! confess it to thy God, that thou wilt not come to the Light of Truth because thou lovest lies; confess that thou art determined not to know whether Christ is a King and hath a kingdom, because thou art displeased at His suffering form, the mirror in which are reflected thy sins; confess this now, even to-day; be of the truth, whose king now this very day is standing before thy soul and suing for it; that so, by-and-by when thou shalt hear His voice calling thee to judgment, thou mayest not then be forced to exclaim: "Yes, this is the King from whom I have been hiding my face: just and true are His judgments!"

Will it be that Pilate shall now consent to crucify Jesus? Not yet. He goes out to the Jews, and says: "*I find in Him no fault at all.*" He had gone thus far, that he acknowledged Jesus' innocence; but there he stopped; the impression which he had received of the holiness of Jesus did not lead him to

hearken for the voice of truth, to enquire after the kingdom of this king and its blessings, or to expose himself to any risk for the sake of this innocent man; everything that he did was with the view to escape from the decision *for* or *against*. This, however, Jesus the King, cuts him off from doing.

And thou too, my reader, findest no fault in "this man;" thou dost not deny that Jesus is holy, without sin; but thou dost not believe in Him as the Son of God, thy Lord and Saviour. What! dost thou not reflect that this impression which thou hast received of Christ as the sinless and holy one, must, if thou dealest honestly, lead thee to believe in Him as thy Lord and thy God? Or is it that He has not said He is the Son of God? He *has* said it, and has declared that He gives His life for the redemption of sinners. Now, dost thou take Him to be One in whose mouth was found no guile? then make thy decision for Him; take Him as thy Lord; pray to God for light, that thou mayest find guilt *in thyself*, and forgiveness of thy guilt in the blood of the Son of God, who Himself knew no sin but was made sin *for thee*: press on to know the whole truth; for if not, the knowledge of the truth which thou dost now possess will be taken from thee; thou wilt become blind to the Saviour's holy form, and treat Him ill, even as Pilate did.

Christ before Pilate.

2. BARABBAS, OR JESUS ?

CHAPTER XVIII. 39, 40.

THE conflict still goes on in Pilate's soul between the powers of heaven and of hell. But the good angels were even now beginning to vacate the field ; they have no power to relieve this besieged soul ; for Pilate is negotiating with the enemy, and opening to him one door after another. Would we learn what the end is of a *divided heart* ? Pilate can teach us.

His first attempt to escape from the necessity of deciding for or against Jesus, by sending Him (as we learn from St. Luke) to Herod, had fallen to the ground. Herod had mocked Jesus, but had not judged Him (Luke xxiii. 11). With sorrow, such as he had never felt before, the governor beholds the multitude rushing back again into his palace, with Jesus in their midst clothed in the white robe. In the meantime, he had got even more strongly than before to feel that Jesus was innocent ; and the words of the King of Truth were pricking into his heart like red-hot needles. Now Pilate, do by all means perform thine office, and rescue this innocent man from the hands of His persecutors ! Nay more ! do thou follow the alluring voice of this King, and enter into His kingdom ! Why delayest thou ? But this latter was just it which Pilate would not do ; he would not join himself to that kingdom which is not of this world ; for he would then have been forced immediately to become enemies with this world, with his former life, with his

idols, with public opinion, with the emperor. His courage failed him to enter upon this path. Therefore he laboured to procure Jesus's release without being forced to be himself the man who should release Him. He wished to mediate.

At first he tried what reason would do with the wild rabble. He calls around him not only the chief priests and rulers, but also the people, among whom he flattered himself there would be certainly some grateful followers of Jesus ; and he represents to them that neither he nor Herod, who was himself a Jew, had found any fault in "this man" worthy of death, nor touching one of those things whereof they accused Him. Thus he bears fresh witness to the innocence of Jesus ; and this he does again and again. A Christian here reflects, that such a Jesus we must have had, in whom, when he was judged, nothing worthy of death could be found, because He was to expiate and atone for everything worthy of death which God's judicial eye could discover in us sinners. Therefore it is that the Evangelists relate so minutely how one testimony followed after another to His innocence, down to that given by the thief and the centurion.

But from the innocence of Jesus, Pilate comes to a marvellous conclusion : "*I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him,*" he says (Luke xxiii. 16). If he is innocent, why does he not release Him at once ? If He deserves to be chastised, why does he call Him innocent ? This absurd contradiction he deemed wise. He wanted to *release* the Lord to satisfy his conscience ; he wanted to *chastise* Him to satisfy his fear of man. He imagined that a king who had been disgraced by scourging would no longer be an object of envy to the chief priests. He has already gone thus far in deciding *against* the Lord : he will *scourge* Him. When he reached this point, the devil thought, "Now it is certain thou wilt consent to *crucify* Him also !"

And thou, how far art *thou* ready to go in sin in order to please the world ? And is it so, that thou too art ready, not, to be sure, to crucify Christ's members, but yet to scourge

them? not to join in the coarse blasphemy of ungodly men, but yet so far to consent to their proscription, that thou escapest from the shame which they bear? Is it that thou art willing, not perhaps in plain terms, to give the lie to God's word, but yet to scourge the "letter" of that word out of compliment to *thy* "spirit" and the spirit of the time? Is it that thou art willing, not perhaps insolently to trample upon God's clear command, but yet to evade it so far as thou canst with decency? Now behold! Pilate wanted to scourge Jesus, and then, to release Him; but out of that "releasing" came crucifying. But even yet he draws back his word. His conscience even yet is struggling against even this scourging of the innocent Jesus, when suddenly a plan flashes across his mind whereby he may escape out of his painful dilemma.

Ver. 39. "*Ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?*"

What Pilate hoped was, that the people who zealously held by this custom, which perhaps had reference to the *passing over* commemorated by the feast, would beg that Jesus should be released; it was very possible (he thought) that the *people*, mindful of the benefits of their "King," might seize this opportunity to gain for themselves the glory of having saved His life. The opposition of the chief priests he thought to disarm in thus placing by the side of Jesus a second prisoner, and indeed one who had been notoriously convicted of the very crime of which they had accused Jesus. He conceived it to be impossible that they should prefer the rebel Barabbas to Jesus. Oh, what various and subtle arts does this prudent man contrive, merely that he may escape from the necessity of saying Yes or No to the question: What thinkest *thou* of Christ? Wilt thou be His friend or His enemy?

But the choice which he would fain thrust off upon the people, he himself has to make at last. It was so ordered by the finger of God that the sin to which he would consent if he

decided against Jesus, should be plainly placed before his eyes in all its naked enormity: now he can only decide against Jesus by deciding at the same time for Barabbas—against the Son of God for a child of the devil. Barabbas means, son of the father; what kind of a father's son this murderer was, we see written in chap. viii. 44. Thus, then, we behold Jesus the Son of God, the express image of the Father, standing side by side with Barabbas, the son of his father the devil. The people, and Pilate as well, have to choose between these two. “*Will ye—so begins Pilate—that I release unto you the King of the Jews?*” Not in derision of Jesus does he call Him so: but he is trying whether the people might not feel ashamed. True, he himself leaves it unsaid whether this man is a king; but he reminds the people of Palm Sunday, when, on His entrance into Jerusalem, they had greeted Him as their King; for this had doubtless come to his ears. Will ye submit to the shame of his being put to death whom ye yourselves have called a king? so Pilate means to say. And then, looking at the chief priests and elders, *who, he knew, had delivered Him for envy*, he adds (as we learn from the other gospels), “*Which will ye that I release unto you: Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ?*” As if he said, Which will ye have? the man whose crime is murder and rebellion, or Him whose only fault consists in this, that He has found people to take Him for the Messiah whom your nation is expecting, so that they left you to follow Him? Thus clearly does Pilate see through the mind of the Scribes and Pharisees; thus rightly does he weigh the guilt of Jesus, which indeed is only this, that He is Christ whom the world hates; and, nevertheless, his divided heart is able rather to release Barabbas, because thereby he should keep the world's friendship, than Jesus, because that would have brought upon him the world's enmity.

Ver. 40. “*Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.*”

In St. Mark we read (xv. 11), “*But the chief priests moved*

the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them." This accursed deed of the leaders of the people, who made the blind to wander out of their way (Deut. xxvii. 18), Peter afterwards pressed upon their conscience, when he says, "Ye delivered Him up and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go ; but ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you (Acts iii. 13, 14). The governor hears with horror what the rulers of the people are doing ; the message of his wife's dream has raised to a still higher pitch the anguish of his soul (Matt. xxvii. 19). The words, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man !" keep ringing in his ear. And yet—O enemy of souls, how cruelly wicked art thou in thy deceit?—he yet repeats the fatal question : "*Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you ?*" And when now at length he is answered by the shout of the fanatic rabble, "*Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas !*" he cries out—yes, it is more a cry of anguish than a question—" *What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ !*" For he was willing to release Jesus, St. Luke expressly adds (xxiii. 20). He was willing, and he also was not willing ; he did not will it with the resolute energy of a soul which really abhors sin and gives itself up to God. He was willing ! oh, thou Pilate's will, thou art indeed of little worth ! It is with this will that many a soul, entangled in the web of sin, desires to return, and therewith only paves its way to hell with good intentions. For such faint willing, which shrinks back from repentance and conflict, does not in the least alarm the devil : with his arrows he can easily pierce the paper shield of such so-called good desires. So here he assails the hesitating judge with the shout of the enraged multitude, "*Crucify Him ! crucify Him !*" For the third time does Pilate remonstrate, "*Why, what evil hath He done ? I have found no cause of death in Him,*" and goes back to his former expedient of proposing to scourge Him only. But the shout, "Crucify,

crucify!" grew louder and louder. *Then Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing.* And why not? Because he did not earnestly and at any price will to release Him. Yet he really persuaded himself that he had done all that was possible, and that now the crucifixion of Jesus was not *his* fault. "*I am innocent of the death of this just person,*" he says, "*see ye to it!*" and with these words he takes water and washes his hands.

Let us cast one more glance at these two, Jesus and Barabbas; and let us endeavour to see them in *that* light in which God looked down upon this unheard of scene, when the murderer, the child of the devil, was preferred to His only-begotten Son. The eternal Father saw herein a representation of that marvellous interchange which for our salvation He had determined upon; namely, that His dear Son should work out our freedom by means of His own condemnation. Yes, God, in His supreme justice, did that which Pilate and the Jews did in their supreme injustice—He condemned Jesus, He released Barabbas. "Whether of these twain?" God proposed this question likewise to Himself, choosing between sinful mankind and His own Son; and He did *not spare* His Son, in order that He might be able with justice to spare mankind, remaining *righteous*, whilst He forgives sin (1 John i. 9).

Barabbas—that is I!—a lost, condemned man, but redeemed, purchased, won, because Jesus was willing to take my place. Concerning this Rambach says: "As here Barabbas is exchanged for Jesus, Barabbas set free and Jesus crucified: so the first Adam (of whom Barabbas is the type), with all his posterity, is exchanged for the second Adam, who takes his place; the latter is condemned to death, whilst the former is released. This is the inconceivable marvel of the divine love, whereby justice and mercy have kissed each other, and have been joined in the most delightful union. Justice is here appeased, because the sentence of death which she has pro-

nounced is executed, though not on the sinner, yet on the sinner's Surety. But mercy can now bestow pardon upon the sinner, and set him free, because the Surety has suffered in his stead the execution of the sentence. Oh, marvel of love, which on our parts calls for the lowliest reverence and adoration !”

Christ before Pilate.

3. BEHOLD THE MAN !

CHAPTER XIX. 1-5.

Ver. 1. "*Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him.*"

Then, when again a chance of retreat was cut off from this truth-fleeing man. He will soon now bring it to the point when he shall have enough stay to sustain the appeasing thought, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man;" poor brittle stay which was soon to break! Scourging was the customary prelude to crucifixion. Therefore when Pilate condemned Jesus to this punishment, it was as much as saying, "I will deliver Him to be crucified." And so too the people seem to have understood it. But Pilate was still contemplating thereby his escape. He imagined that the woful sight of the scourged Jesus would arouse the compassion of the raging multitude. When this failed, yes, when even this last attempt which he made to liberate the just man came to nought through his fear of the emperor, then, and not till then, did he determine upon putting into execution the sentence which he had in fact as good as pronounced before. In this way the account of St. Matthew and St. Mark is completely brought into harmony with that of St. John.

Pilate *took* Jesus. He commands Him to be seized. Oh, how inconceivably great is that love which sent forth the Son out of its bosom and gave Him up to such a *taking*; and how inconceivably great too is that love which *allowed* itself to be

thus taken ! It is soon said, He *scourged* Him. But we dare not pass over the words thus lightly. Try to imagine, oh my soul, what it is which is now being done to thy Saviour. According to the Roman custom, His hands are bound fast to a low pillar, and His breast and back are bared. The soldiers then approach. They hold in their hands whips plaited with thongs, tipped with iron wire. Therewith they strike, heaping lash upon lash, until the Lord's tender, sacred body is shamefully lacerated ; His precious blood trickles down from many a cruel wound. Thus we see written on His back in letters of blood the fulfilment of His own prophecy in St. Luke xviii. 32.

"Stripes are prepared for the back of fools" (Prov. xix. 29) : how, then, do they come upon Thy back, Thou who art eternal wisdom ? "Many stripes" belong to the disobedient servant (Luke xii. 47) : how, then, hast Thou deserved them, Thou who art God's righteous servant ? Scripture gives us the answer : "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The punishment lay upon *Him*, that *we* might have peace, and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii. 5). Therefore the holy Bernhard had good reason to rejoice and say, "*For me* He was scourged, that He might deliver me from the scourgings of the wrath to come ; *for me* He was wounded, that He might heal me." Consentingly and patiently does the Lord submit His body to these painful lashes, that sacred body, intended and prepared for sacrifice. What is it that binds His hands to the shameful pillar, so that He keeps still, quite still and quiet ? What, but His love to us ? Nought else could have had power to bind Him. "I gave my back to the smiters" (Isa. l. 6), was what long before He had declared through the prophet. The multitude of blows which fell upon His pure, unspotted body, corresponds to the multitude of fleshly lusts which "work" (as St. Paul says, Rom. vii.) in our sinful body. "We know that our old man is crucified with Him" (Rom. vi. 6) ; we know, then, also, that our old man has been *scourged*

with Him, and in Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed. "All had for its aim the destruction of the body of sin. And as the Redeemer was to accomplish this through His meritorious death ; so also all these preliminary sufferings of His body, according to the Divine rights appertained thereto ; and, indeed, for this reason, because the claims of God's retributive justice, not only appoint the well-merited punishment as a whole, but also the punishment due to each separate kind of transgression. The chastisement of the rod belongs, in human life, to the lust-ing flesh of naughty children, and the chastisement of the scourge to self-willed flesh of disobedient servants. There stands the pure and guiltless one, in garb of a servant, bound to the pillar, and He must submit to be scourged, on account of our self-willed and wanton flesh, which has broken out into rebellion against God's law. There, in His holy body, He shows us that we had deserved nothing, but that God should lay upon us all His rods and scourges, to beat us down, to quell our fleshly lusts, and make them bitter to us." (Steinhof.) The fruit of Christ's scourging is the deliverance of believers from the power of the sinful lusts which are in their flesh. Their power is broken, for they *are* punished in Christ ; they *are* already put to death ; in the sufferings of the Saviour's flesh the dominion of sin is brought to an end (1 Pet. iv. 1). And although they may attract and allure us,—“Christ is our best Intercessor, who has as many tongues for us as He received wounds, when He was scourged for us.” (J. Gerhard.)

Before the message, *Christ our Righteousness!* was revived again in the Church, and the Lutheran “*for us*” was again the refreshment of weary souls, men could not draw this consolation from the suffering of our Saviour's scourging. In the third, and again the second century before the Reformation, it was, that whole hosts of self-bewailing penitents came forth from Italy, and spread over Germany. They were called *Flagellants*. Naked to the waist, with black or white coverings on their heads, day and night they roamed through towns and villages singing

penitential hymns, (such as, "Day of wrath, that dreadful day"—*Dies iræ, dies illa*), and flogging one another with sharp scourges. Sincere and pious people were at times to be found amongst them; especially I may mention the Spanish preacher Ferreri. Now-a-days the world laughs at such "fools." But that mocking world's redeemer from the anguish of mind which oppressed those self-punishers, is not called Jesus, but I. They redeem themselves without repentance. Instead of renouncing sin, they bid it away from them; instead of abrogating it, they deny its existence, which certainly is more convenient. Verily all unbelievers stand very far behind these poor souls thus impotently struggling with their sense of the wrath of God! Ay, and they stand behind the Hindus, who bore sharp red-hot nails into their sinful flesh, in order that they may become holy. To possess peace and joy without daily scourging one's self in some self-chosen manner (as much whether only inwardly as outwardly), can only be the happy lot of him who believes that he has been once for all scourged in Jesus, and who, with St. Paul, bears in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus (Gal. vi. 17). He who in any other way boasts of a good conscience, is dead while he lives. May God bestow upon this careless generation the alarmed consciences in which Luther found so much to relieve and console!

The Lord Jesus was scourged *for us*: then, if we believe this, the Spirit of God calls upon us, from love to our Saviour, patiently to submit to every scourging which, as Christians, we may have to suffer, either in word or deed. "What glory is it," says St. Peter (in his first Epistle, chap. ii. 20, 21), "if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps." When what the Lord foretold, in Matt. x. 17, really came to pass, and the apostles were scourged for the Gospel's sake, then "they departed from the presence of the

council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts v. 41). To suffer *thus* is what is meant by suffering *with Christ* (1 Pet. iv. 13), and this suffering we may call the *cross*. All chastisement which *God* lays upon us we should suffer in a Christ-like manner; that is, in patience and humiliation under God's hand; but the Father's rod, which we kiss, is not one and the same thing with the world's scourge, for this last puts honour upon us, and stamps us with Christ's mark.

Ver. 2, 3. "*And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote Him with their hands.*"

After the scourging, fresh scorn and shame was heaped upon the suffering Jesus. He had said: "*I am a King;*" therefore the soldiers of the governor now begin to mock His royalty, just as the servants of Caiaphas had before derided Him as Prophet. And the governor allows it all. He even desires that Jesus should be thus pitifully treated, hoping that thereby he might perhaps even yet escape the guilt of His death. Let us with the eye of faith gaze into this contumely of our martyred King of Glory. It is a ninefold suffering: First, *They call together the whole band*, so St. Mark tells us (chap. xv. 16). The scourging had probably been inflicted, as was customary, by four soldiers. These four now lead the scourged Jesus up into the inner court of the hall of justice, and here the whole band gather round Him, some hundred men, and these work upon Him their devilish pleasure. Then it was that He reached that point of suffering which He had predicted in the words: "The Son of Man shall be delivered unto the Gentiles" (Luke xviii. 32). He was given over, like a doe to a pack of savage hounds, to a company of rough, unruly rascals, and insolent mockers, in the same way as the soul of Job was His holy soul vexed (Job xxx. 1). Listen to the words of a devout soul on this subject: "Oh, my Saviour, I give thee thanks that Thou hast permitted Thy-

self to be placed in the assembly of wicked men, in order that I may be delivered from their company, and promoted instead to the company of the first-born which are written in heaven. Make me willing, through the knowledge of this inconceivable love, to give up myself also for Thy sake, and for Thy name, to be reviled even by those who are inferior to me. Arm my soul, I pray Thee, with Thine own patience, whenever I am constrained to behold, how the benighted world insolently mocks my hidden glory, the glory which I have in Thee, and treats me as 'a lamp despised' (Job xii. 5), and a mere object for ridicule. Thou hast sanctified my shame: I will therefore bear it with joy, and ever prefer it infinitely to all the honour which the world can bestow." (Rambach.)

Secondly, *They stripped Him* (see Matt. xxvii. 28). In this picture of His chaste and holy body, the temple of the godhead, being stripped bare by the hands of a godless rabble, how do we see fulfilled the mournful complaint which David utters in Psa. lxi. : "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness." He who made clothes for the first sinners, to cover their nakedness, must Himself be found naked and uncovered ! But it was in *our* nakedness and shame that He stood there, as in like manner He afterwards hung upon the cross.

Thirdly, *They put on Him a purple robe.** "Adam and Eve would fain have covered their nakedness with fig-leaves, but these had no power to hide their sin from the sight of God; therefore with a purple robe Christ is covered, which He reddened with His own blood, that so He might obtain for us the garment of righteousness." (Gerhard.) Whatever of the purple colour was wanting in the royal robe, was supplied by the blood, richly poured out, of the scourged King, and that is *His* purple. Just as Herod had meant to mock Him by putting on Him a

* St. Matthew calls the robe which they threw on Him a *scarlet* robe. It was, therefore, not of a precisely purple colour, but only something like purple—an old cast-off soldier's cloak which they had looked up in some corner of the military establishment.

dirty white robe—though behold, the pure-white garment of innocence is what belongs to Him!—so here they would mock Him, as being a poor sorry king who could find nothing better to array himself in than a soiled soldier's cloak, looking something like purple—whilst behold, the royal purple in truth belongs to Him, for He is the King of His Church, her bloody Prince, who, in making atonement for our sins, trod the wine-press of the wrath of God, and dyed His garments red (Isa. lxi. 1-3). “My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand” (Cant. v. 10).

Fourthly, *They platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head.* This they did to deride and torture Him. To torture Him, for with their harnessed fists they press the sharp thorns into His brow from which dropped the sweat of anguish; to deride Him, for they placed on His head the crown of thorns, in order to adorn His mock royalty. And, yet, what crown could have been imagined for our King Jesus which should have so exactly suited Him, as this *crown of thorns*? He who came to obtain for us the blessing, bears what the curse-laden earth brings forth, being made a curse for us. The thorns might with justice have been turned into instruments of *our* torture, for they are emblems of our earthly lusts and cares, growing and flourishing in our heart, and choking there so many noble grains of seed; but now they torture *Him*—and *to us* the crown of glory is given, the crown of life and righteousness. Yes, as from amid thorns roses grow, so does Christ's crown of thorns bear the roses of victory with which His believers are adorned. How well did that converted Tahitian, *Bara* his name was, understand the comfort to be derived from these thorn-wounds of Jesus; when on his deathbed, he said: “The blood of Jesus is my sure foundation. He is the best of all kings. He gives me *a pillow for my head without thorns.*”

But let us with trembling contemplate our King's crown of thorns as often as our flesh would fain indulge in luxury or sensuality; whenever the old man within us tries to lift up his

head, let us place that crown upon him. A certain King of Jerusalem refused to wear a crown of gold in the place where his Saviour had walked crowned with thorns; and should we be grasping after worldly honours, and take delight in the glorification of the flesh, we who bow the knee at the name of a King, whose crown loudly proclaims to us, "*My kingdom is not of this world!*"

Let us also look for comfort to Jesus' crown of thorns, when pierced by the thorns of sorrow and sickness; dost thou deem what is laid upon thee too hard to bear? look at the head covered with blood and wounds, which in silent patience and in perfect acquiescence bowed beneath the crown of sorrow. Yes, in thy every sorrow fix thine eyes upon His attire of sorrow. Every sorrow and temptation which the believer for Christ's sake endures, is a crown of thorns wounding his head; he who bears and overcomes this wounding, gathers for himself so many precious stones for his eternal crown as the number of his thorns was, which crowned him in time. So has Christ been crowned. And the bride of the Lamb is like Him. "As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters" (Cant. ii. 2). We must yet add a passage from Augustine on this subject: "Upon His head is placed a crown of thorns, because the sting of our sins, from the atonement of which His kingly glory springs, may be compared to the sting of dry thorn prickles. Let us, on the contrary, use all diligence that the life of the members may be the crown of the Head!" Yes, to reward Him for His crown of thorns, may His Church crown Him with the crown of joy: sinners whom He saves are His crown (Cant. iii. 11).

Fifthly. "*They put a reed in His right hand.*" Instead of the royal purple, an old discoloured scarlet mantle; instead of the crown of diamonds, a prickly wreath of thorns; instead of the golden sceptre, a brittle reed staff: thus do they array this King! Christ's kingdom, whose glory is inward and invisible, is laughed at by the children of the world as being a *reed-*

kingdom, which is easily destroyed. Yet is Christ's rod, which is His *word*, a *mighty* rod; it is a real and true sceptre; with it He gently guides His sheep; with it He wounds the head of His enemies. But when I consider carefully this reed-staff in my Jesus' hand, I yet find that it well becomes Him. For, indeed, it is myself, a fragile reed, that Jesus is bearing in His right hand, and He is not ashamed of me. Hilary says: "Christ held a reed in His hand in order to show that He holds us in His hand—us weak, fragile, and hollow children of men—and fills us with all His blessings; and that He would fain support and strengthen our faith, that tottering reed, so that it may not entirely break to pieces."

Sixthly. *They mocked Him, and began to salute Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!* To their deeds of scorn they now add words of scorn and blasphemy. *They bowed the knee before Him, and worshipped Him;* the homage which was rendered to a king, they offered to Him in scorn. They greeted this new King of the Jews whom they had arrayed and crowned, by the title of His dignity. Of this also had the Lord prophesied; this too belonged to the full measure of His suffering. He permitted this mocking fools'-play to be wrought upon Him in order to atone for our pride, our arrogance, which sets itself up to be its own master; ours was the due of eternal disgrace and shame, but the King of kings descends into the deepest vale of humiliation, shame and scorn for us, to obtain for us the dignity of kings. Let us in true earnest salute our derided King; let us bow the knee before Him and kiss His sceptre. He is worthy of such homage.

Seventhly. *They spat upon Him.* (See Matt.) Instead of tribute and kingly offerings, they give Him shame and spitting. This shame was His that He might, as in a mirror, reflect, and at the same time wash away, our filthy face of sin. May His countenance now shine forth from our heart in which He dwells, with all the clearer and purer lustre! Yes, let us cast out from our soul all impure thoughts, for they spit upon Jesus.

Eighthly. *They smote Him with their hands.* These blows also does the suffering King of glory receive in quiet patience. And what do *we* take patiently for His Name's sake? Ah, beloved Christians, if we are already so fearful of the cross, and so above measure gratify our love of ease and indulgence, now when the shame and scorn to be endured for Jesus' sake is altogether in reality so small, what shall we do if we should live to see the day, now fast approaching, of which Scripture prophesies, that it will cost the *blood* of believers! In every tribulation only let us persevere, if through grace that *blessedness* is ours of which Christ speaks: "*Blessed* are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you;" and likewise St. Peter: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, *happy* are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." And this blessedness is to us, if we accept the cross as an assurance of God's love towards us, in deeming us worthy to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. viii. 29).

Ninthly and lastly. *They took the reed, and smote Him on the head* (Matt). Kings extend their sceptre to be kissed; Christ is struck on the head with His reed-sceptre, and the sharp crown of thorns is beaten down deeply into His brow. And from whom at the present day does He endure the same treatment? From all who falsify and corrupt His word, from all enthusiasts, who go a-whoring after their own imaginations. These take Christ's royal sceptre, which is the word of holy Scripture, and beat Him on the head.

Oh, what Christ had to endure, even before He was lifted up on the cross! From such suffering the malefactors who were crucified with Him were spared. But Jesus, the defenceless Jesus, who is soon to die, is seen tortured by hardened soldiers, and has heaped upon Him insult and shame. *For our sakes*—if I were not sure of that, thought would fail me at this sight; then one of these two things could not be true—either Jesus was not the Holy One of God without sin, or else God was not the righteous Judge. But yes, *for our sins He was bruised*; that

explains all. God took pity upon Isaac, and said to Abraham, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto Him;" but He restrained not the hands which were beating and abusing His own Son, for He spared Him not for our sakes. Oh, the wondrous love of God! oh the willing Love of Jesus, which has given Itself as a sacrifice for us wholly and entirely, in every member of its holy body! "Not *one* member of the Lord's only, but His whole body, had to suffer the most cruel torture; His head was wounded by the crown of thorns, by fist blows, by smiting with the reed; His face suffered spitting and cuffs with the hand; His whole body was mangled with scourging, it was stripped, it was covered with a cloak of scorn; His hands held the reed; and afterwards His tongue was forced to taste vinegar and gall. Because in all our members sin dwells and works, therefore has Christ willed for our sins to suffer in all His members." (Chrysostom.) And Bernhard says: "Not with His eyes alone did Christ weep, but with all His members; that so His whole body, which is the Church, might be cleansed through the tears of His whole body."

Ver. 4, 5. "*Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man!*"

So far Pilate had allowed this unheard-of spectacle. But now he thinks it has lasted long enough. He therefore again leaves his palace, steps forth before the people, and says with forced calmness, "*Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him.*" Thus the sight of this scourged and abused One was to convince the people that Pilate found no fault in Him. This prudent man speaks like one distracted. But his true meaning is this: "I have granted your wish; I have had Him scourged; are ye satisfied—surely? Disquiet me no further concerning this matter! Is this miser-

able man at all worth your making such a tumult about?" So thinks Pilate; and as Jesus now steps out through the door of the court, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, trembling with pain, without form or comeliness, the most despised and scorned of all men, His judge exclaims—subduing his own feelings at the sight—in a tone of high-bred compassion, "*Behold the Man!*" Have pity upon him! Grant him his miserable life!

So despised was Jesus become, that, as an object too mean and wretched for hatred, He was given over to mere indifference, or at furthest, pity. This contempt Christ still endures in His Church, in His members. True, indifference is more and more every day giving place to open and decided enmity, which increases the more in proportion as the Church begins to show that she is not dead but lives, and lives to overcome the world. But yet believers are frequently *pitied*, especially by the wise and noble of this world, as being a narrow set far behind the rest of the world, as not exactly hurtful, not worth being angry with, ay, and even useful for some purposes, such as giving away money when they have it to give, &c. It is best (they say) to ignore their views, when they do not quite drive them so far as to be mischievous, and so on. This manner of speaking, what is it but mocking Christ, crowning Him again with thorns, throwing round Him a faded purple garment instead of a royal robe? What is it, but scourging Him afresh in His members, and then saying, "*Behold, the man!*" And when men extol the Lord Christ as Redeemer, Saviour, Lord, Master, and with all His other titles of honour, whilst all the while they scorn and trample upon His *blood*, whilst they deny His eternal and essential Godhead, whilst they reject His dwelling and ruling in His Church upon earth, whilst they smile at the notion of His coming again to judgment in the clouds of heaven—when men do this, so that instead of His being our One and All, they make of Him a fill-nitch, a beautifully dressed out but idle figure, a patch on the garment of

their own righteousness and wisdom; what is it, but putting into His hand a reed instead of a kingly sceptre, bowing the knee before Him, and saluting Him, Hail, King of the Jews! And all such *half measures* are, besides, the only veiled way of consenting to the devil's requirement that they should *entirely* renounce Christ. Pilate scourged Jesus—afterwards he condemned Him to be crucified.

But as in the whole history of the Passion, we should look beyond the hands and mouths of men, and should recognise the hand and counsel of the Heavenly Father, so also here in this particular. Pilate unwittingly spoke a word in which is contained the secret of our redemption, our deepest disgrace, and our highest glory; a word which, by the mouth of Pilate, the Lord Jesus Himself speaks forth to His people, ay, to the whole world, to which He here exhibits Himself in His suffering form; a word which has ever since been repeated by all believers, both when suffering the bitterness of repentance and experiencing the joy of believing: "BEHOLD THE MAN!" Then was fulfilled the Scripture: "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Jesus stands there in the place of sinners, in the most extreme contempt; for shame is inseparably bound up with sin. Allow me to quote words from Theremin, which, since the time that I first heard them, have stuck in my heart as arrows of Jesus' love. He says: "It is for this cause that shame was heaped upon Him; and those who ill-treated Him set forth, as in a visible figure, those torments which await the sinner. He despises himself; if he is clothed with outward honour and dignity, he looks into his inmost heart, and says, Thou art for all that a good for nothing creature! His companions in sin despise him: if he should try to raise himself above them, they remind him of such and such things, and say, 'Down with thee! thou art no better than we!' And yet this is only a slight prelude of the shame into which the judgment of condemnation will plunge him, when once it shall be pronounced.

The prophet paints to us the commotion which is raised in hell when there comes down to it such a condemned one; how all his fellow-damned shout round him in derision, Thou also art become weak as we, thou art become like unto us. Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of the viols. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! (Isa. xiv). And with a voice of deeper meaning than that of the prophet does Christ's shame speak to us. Then will the inhabitants of the bottomless pit surround the new comer, and say, *Behold the man!* Was not this man created in the image of God? Should he not be a king of the earth? Ought he not to wear the heavenly crown? Should he not with his Redeemer judge the world, judge us? See now, what has become of him! A miserable wretch, thrust out by Heaven, and trodden under foot by Hell. Up! Greet him with the titles of his lost dignity! Call him king in all languages which are spoken in hell! Let his torment be our entertainment throughout eternity!"

Ah! if such a fate were in store for us, my brethren! If we were thus to be thrust down, cast out even by those themselves cast out! If throughout all eternity, we should be pierced by this shame, this sharpest arrow of eternal death! But be at peace, my brethren, if you believe in Christ. This, indeed, is what we have deserved, but it shall not happen to us. Christ has taken it from us; the shame has been all spent on Him, nothing of it is left for us; nothing now remains for us but high honour, unspeakable glory, which He has obtained for us by thus patiently bearing this shame. By this crown of thorns He obtained for us the crown of heaven; by His purple robe the glittering robe of His merit; by His staff of reed the office of judge, which, together with Him, the saints shall exercise over the world. Thus adorned, we shall enter heaven, and the angels will say: "*Behold the man!*" Behold, what glory! In Him give glory to the Lord, who for him descended into the lowest depth of shame, who has taken it away from him, who has

clothed him with His own dignity, who has done more for him than for the angels !”

In the man Christ Jesus, the only Mediator, we see both at once, our sin and our righteousness, our curse and our blessing, our shame and our glory ; both what *we* deserved and what *He* deserved. “ Therefore—so Luther exhorts—do thou learn Christ, the crucified Christ, till, having lost all trust in thyself, thou canst extol Him, and say: *Thou, my Lord Jesus, art my righteousness, whilst I am Thy sin. Thou hast taken upon Thee what is mine, and Thou hast given me what is Thine.* Thou hast taken to Thyself that which Thou wast not, and Thou hast given to me that which I was not !”

Behold the man! May this image of our Lord Jesus, as we see Him standing before Pilate, be deeply engraven in our heart of hearts ! When, in the hour of temptation, the devil shall cast our sins in our teeth, and shall whisper to us: Behold the man thou art ! then may we also answer him: *Behold the man!* whilst we point the accuser to our Surety, who, in the crown of thorns and the purple robe, expiated our sins, and through His blood so abundantly shed, has obtained for us abundant forgiveness.

Under suffering and the cross, if we hear such whispers as these: Behold the man thou art ! by God and man forsaken—where is now thy God ? and if we are ready to lose patience, and utterly despair, let us make answer to the tempter: *Behold the man!* and let us flee to our dear Lord, who, for our sakes, has suffered far greater and more heavy woes than we, and has sanctified our every burden. He opened not His mouth, no cry of impatience escaped His holy lips ;—and should we murmur and fret over the sufferings which are made so precious by His sympathy with us as His members ? No, we should rather rejoice at there being in us any conformity to the likeness of His suffering ; for then in glory too we shall be like Him ;—“ because as He is, so are we in this world.”

But from sensual pleasures of worldly men, yes, and from all

the glory of the flesh, which the devil promises to give us, if we would fall down and worship Him, from all such let us turn away and say: *Behold the man!* let us place before our eyes Jesus, who, renouncing riches and honour and pleasures, presents Himself to our view as poor, naked, despised, and crowned with thorns. And if we should find one who is forsaken and despised, sick and sorrowful in body and soul, in short, a Lazarus, or one of those who are "accounted as sheep appointed to be slain," as "the offscouring of all things," then let us recognise the features of our Jesus, as we here behold Him, full of sorrow and acquainted with grief, and let us desire not to be ashamed of Him in the very least of His members.

Once more then: *Behold the man!* The sight will not weary us. This *Ecce homo!* will continue to refresh us until we shall behold our King in His beauty, and recognise Him by the marks of His passion, as the "Lamb that hath been slain."

Christ Before Pilate.

4. CÆSAR'S FRIEND.

CHAPTER XIX. 6-16.

"BEHOLD *the man!*" such were the words with which Pilate, himself moved by the suffering appearance of the scourged Jesus, presented to the people their King. And for a moment it seemed as if he would obtain his object. The people were silent.

Ver. 6, 7. "*When the chief priests therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye Him, and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.*"

When the *chief priests*, those men, who beyond everything hated the Saviour of sinners as being the accuser of their glistening sanctimoniousness, the destroyer of their hollow righteousness, but yet were now forced to look into this mirror of themselves—when they and their officers saw Jesus, they cried out: *Crucify Him, crucify Him!* This is horrible. Then was fulfilled that which is written in Psalm lxix.: "They persecute Him whom Thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of those whom Thou hast wounded;" then too was fulfilled that which He Himself had prophesied in the parable: "When the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves: This is the Heir, come! let us kill Him" (Matt. xxi. 38). If God ever shewed His long-suffering great, it was here, when this devilish

outcry for the blood of His Son rose up into His ear, and yet He held His peace. How may Jesus, during these hours, have prayed for the souls of His persecutors! My soul, for thee also! For verily, my sins too were present, when this cry was raised to crucify the Son of God. And those who will not, through His sufferings, allow themselves to be disciplined so as to yield up to His bloody death all proud conceits of their own virtue, and to renounce every ungodly habit and every worldly lust—all who will not submit to this, do but repeat the cry: Crucify Him! Every one who refuses to crucify himself, crucifies Jesus Christ.

Pilate is astounded at the cruel fury of the chief-priests. He is determined now to go no further. His conscience is uneasy at his having even permitted Him to be scourged and so shamefully ill-used, and on this account He is vehemently enraged against the Jews, who had driven him to it. For the third time, therefore, he declares to them that he can find no fault in Him; he is resolved to break away from their hold upon Him; and so, as if to end the matter, he throws to them the mocking answer, "Take *ye* Him, and crucify Him"—as much as to say, "See to it how far your outcries can reach"—for the Jews durst not put any man to death. Deluded Pilate, the matter cannot so end! Either *for* Him or *against* Him; either the enemy of the Jews and of Satan, or of Jesus and God—from this choice there is no escape. It is a matter either of saving or of losing *thy soul*, that thou must either release or condemn Jesus; the matter is too serious for thee to escape from it by a mocking repartee! And the Jews inexorably held Him fast. They had failed in bringing Christ to the cross as a *rebel*; they therefore now brought forward the accusation upon which He had previously been found guilty of death by the Sanhedrim. "*He made Himself the Son of God!*" and by so saying, as Rambach remarks, they became also betrayers of the highest mystery of their theology, which they here rendered contemptible before a heathen judge, who understood nothing at all about it." They require that Pilate should execute the sentence of death, which, in their

law, was 'attached to blasphemy (Lev. xxiv. 16). Thus, then, was it to be made known before the worldly tribunal why Jesus "ought to die." But, in reality, it was another *Ought* which delivered Him over to death, of which they knew nothing; *that* Ought, that wondrous law, of which the apostle speaks in Heb. ii. 17. Because Jesus Christ is the Son of God come in the flesh, therefore it most certainly behoved Him to die; to this was He foreordained before the foundation of the world. But He was not *therefore* to die, because He had *made* himself the Son of God; in this they blaspheme. He had confessed what He *was* and *is* (John v. 18, x. 30; Matt. xxvi. 64); the Father Himself had solemnly acknowledged Him, when His voice had been heard from heaven proclaiming, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" as He long before had already said to Him, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee."

What, then, do unbelievers do, who will not confess that Christ is the true Son of God? With the Jews they sit in judgment upon Christ; and although they do not raise so loud an outcry as the Jews (for what occasion is there for that?) yet they find Him guilty of blasphemy, and therefore have no choice but to say, He is guilty of death. But we who shrink back in horror at such a thought, let us consider who *our* Christ is. He *is* the Son of God, and He *is* the crucified One. Therefore it is for us, for our sakes, that He is crucified. But this belief does not leave man as it found him; it kills and it makes alive; it kills the mind of the old Adam, and it makes alive the mind of the new children of God. Does our belief do this for us? If not, we are no better in the matter than the Jews were, who, out of the Lord Jesus, made a blasphemer of God.

Ver. 8, 9. "*When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid: And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave Him no answer.*"

It required, indeed, such eyes as God alone can give, to be able to discern the Son of God in that humble servant's form, which

caused Pilate to exclaim, "Behold the man!" And yet, even Pilate must have had some glimpse of the glory of the Son of God, which lay veiled under that purple robe and that crown of thorns; he must have had a certain feeling of something supernatural near him, a feeling which was saying to him, "No man who is of this world is capable of enduring all this, and of enduring it it thus." And the Lord's word, *I am a King!* may again have risen up before his mind, together with all the feelings which it had raised. *He was more afraid* than even he was before, with that secret fear which ungodly men feel when conscious of God's nearness, as he heard the word, "Son of God;" and he went again into the judgment hall, ordered Jesus to be brought before him, and says to him, this time, in reality, saying it *of himself*: "*Whence art Thou?*" As much as to say,—It is said that Thou art of Galilee; but whence dost *Thou* say that Thou art? Mightest Thou really be one of those sons of the gods, of whom the sages say, that they sometimes descend from heaven, and walk this earth in human form? Didst Thou, I wonder, allude to this when thou spakest of *coming into the world?* Thus Pilate. How often before may he have scoffed at the fables of his national religion? But now, with his conscience wounded, his soul in anguish, and distracted by conflicting thoughts, he asks,—Was there, nevertheless, to be truth in those stories? In those heathenish legends there lay, indeed, really a faint reflection, a weak shadow of the truth. What the superstitious people of Lystra cried out concerning Paul and Barnabas, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men,"—what the secret anticipation of the heathen, springing from remnants of olden prophecies, and nourished by the secret longing for deliverance from evil, had been prophesying throughout hundreds of years: this was now being fulfilled in Jesus Christ, God and Mary's Son, who here stands before Pilate. But Pilate does not apply himself to force his way through to the saving knowledge of this truth.

And *Jesus gave him no answer.* Why not? Why was He

silent here, when, to the sinner by Jacob's well, to the man born blind, and to other perishing folk, He had said who and whence He was? Behold! this is Pilate's just judgment! He had turned away when Jesus was speaking to him, and was telling him who He was; and now Jesus turns Himself away from him. He had not believed when the truth was offering itself to him for his acceptance (John viii. 46); now he was seeking for the truth and found it not (John viii. 21). He who turns away from the truth when it speaks will obtain no answer when he asks; and for this reason, that his unfaithfulness to the truth, when it was seeking him, has rendered him incapable of asking for it in the *right state of mind*. For how does Pilate now ask? Is it with real concern, with a desire for salvation, and that in Jesus he may lay hold on the Son of God, and embrace Him as *his* God and Saviour? Far was Pilate from that. It was from fear that he asked; he hoped to hear the answer, "I am *not* from heaven; it is not the Son of God, whom thou hast permitted to be scourged and crowned with thorns, but only a man; it is only a man whom thou art about to crucify." For such questioners as this the Lord, the Searcher of hearts, has no answer.

Thus, even now, Scripture is silent to the man, who, with a readiness to condemn Christ, and belief in Him, takes his Bible in his hand, and reads it, in order from it, if possible, to justify his enmity. It would not be silent to him if he meant to act in sincerity. A petition to Christ for enlightenment, even when offered up in a man's last moments, from a death-bed, never fails of being answered, if offered in sincerity and from the heart, and obtains for the suppliant as much grace as is needful for his salvation. But to a Pilate Jesus is silent; but to a man who reads the Scripture with a treacherous intent—as the Scribes and Pharisees, both the old and the new, meet Jesus and His word (Luke xi. 55, xx. 20)—“in order, from its own pages, to dispute its divine origin, to such a man Scripture gives no answer; it remains for him a book sealed with seven seals. Whilst a single eye discovers in it beaming lights which, stream-

ing in from all sides, meet and unite in Christ, and show Him in His glory, an eye which is corrupted by dishonesty in the heart, seeks and finds in it nothing but obscurity, nothing but contradictions ; it seeks and finds them because it has sought to find them. Jesus is silent. Oh, fearful silence ! Oh, terrible punishment ! Oh, prelude of yet greater judgments ! Jesus, the accused, is silent ; Jesus, the Judge, will also hereafter be silent. First he will speak. Ye had Moses and the prophets, He will say ; ye had My words, which are light and life ; why would ye not hear them ? These reproaches will roll like thunder into the ears of the guilty ones. Then will the thunders cease, and the Judge will be silent, and there shall follow a stillness which is more terrible than thunder, the stillness of the eternal decision !" (Theremin).

Pilate is struck at this silence ; he would fain compel the Lord to answer, and He says to Him, in a tone of a judge's offended dignity :—

Ver. 10. "*Speakest Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee?*"

So distinguished in rank, and yet so sorrowful ! This man, anguished by fear, boasts of his power ; he insists upon it that he may, if he pleases, be an unjust judge ; he bids the Son of God remember that life or death hangs upon the sentence which he pronounces. Then the Lord, who was silent before every other blasphemy of His accusers, opened His mouth, in order to defend the honour of His heavenly Father, the honour of His holy Passion, from the arrogant folly of His human judge.

Ver. 11. "*Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin.*"

As if He had said, "It is not *thou*, Pilate, which hast power over life and death, but *the office* which thou bearest, and this power—the power of *magistracy*—is given thee *from above*. The power, in particular, which thou now *hast over me*, has not come

to thee by chance, neither is its source from beneath, in Rome; but it is given to thee *from above*, from *thence from whence I am*." Pilate was constrained to serve God, whom he knew not, as the executor of his purpose. Thus does the Son of God rebuke the boasting of this proud Roman, adding, in gentleness: "*Therefore he that delivereth Me unto thee hath the greater sin.*" *Therefore*—the Lord says—because thou imaginest that it is out of thine own power that thou canst judge Me, because thou knowest not what is above, nor Him who is from above, therefore is thy sin less heavy than the sin of Caiaphas and the chief-priests; for these wilfully refuse to know who I am, that I am Christ, the Son of the true God, and their King. Less heavy than the sin of the sheep of the house of Israel, who would not allow themselves to be lost sheep, and therefore thrust from them their Shepherd,—*less* heavy, truly, and yet heavy was the sin of Pilate, who, held fast by love of the world and fear of man, would not allow the knowledge of Him who was offering to shine into his benighted soul, to carry on his glorious work within him.

Behold Him, ye who worship Him, your Lord Jesus! He is judged, and He acts as Himself judge. The reed with which they mocked Him becomes the little tongue of the balance in which He weighs the sin of His creatures who are judging Him; His purple cloak is turned into judge's robes; He pronounces sentence upon them who condemn Him! But the main point is, that we here see what it was that His holy eye saw beneath this *unjust* judgment of men; namely, the *righteous* judgment of the Father, the gracious judgment of God's holy love upon the sin of the world, which, as the Lamb of God, He was bearing, and by expiating, was bearing away. He looked away from the tumult here below, where hell was raging and the Devil roaring; in holy calmness He fixed His gaze above, from whence the hand of eternal Love was ruling the steps of His enemies with supreme and sovereign power. Yes, His soul collected and strengthened itself in the path of entire obedience to the Father's will, and in unalterable love to us sinners. In perfect submission, He

allowed sentence of crucifixion to be passed upon Him; for, from His high-priestly heart, from His Saviour's mind, which, in compassion, had condescended to our flesh and blood, the certainty was not for one moment banished, that He had to suffer death on the cross *for us*.

"Upon this mystery in Christ's Passion, the eyes of our heart should be more especially turned, that we may not so much behold in it the *wicked hands* of the Jews and Pilate (Acts ii. 23), as the *saving hand* of God (Acts iv. 28); not so much consider the bloody counsel of the Jews deliberating Christ's death, as the holy counsel of God deliberating the atonement of the human race through the death of His Son; in such a manner let us do it, that we may not so much feel horror and anger towards Pilate and the infuriated Jews as towards our sins, because on *their* account it was that power was given to the former to treat Christ so wickedly." (J. Gerhard.)

Pilate is dumb; there is not a trace left of defiance and anger; the sight of the Lord and His words have again made his heart tremble. This Son of God whom he had beaten and scorned, actually sought graciously to find some mitigation of the guilt with which he was loading his soul! Such kindness and gentleness was far beyond the heathen's comprehension; and moreover he may, perhaps, in the words of Christ *from above*, have dimly felt the answer to his question, "*Whence art thou?*" His anguish was increased twofold.

Ver. 12. "*And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him*"—from thenceforth, after this loving word of Jesus. He now once more determined to adopt a direct course of proceeding, and by a decisive sentence to release Jesus. But when he was come out to the raging multitude, his heart failed him to commit himself to such a decisive and abrupt course. He only *sought* to release Him. He spoke in this direction and that of Christ's innocence, and of how he was *mind*ed to release Him, and the like. But the devil despises such "seeking," such try-

ing as that—"The Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, THOU ART NOT CÆSAR'S FRIEND! "Whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar."

Not Cæsar's friend! *That* word took effect. Then had the devil, that "experienced proficient in human nature" (as the dear departed Rambach calls him) hit the sorest place in Pilate's heart. The friend of Cæsar (*amicus Cæsaris*): this honourable title he valued beyond everything. The fear of losing this title overpowered the other fear which he had experienced—the fear of laying violent hands on "the Son of God." In a moment all his anguish at violating his conscience was gone; gone, too, all the reasonable grounds whereby he might easily have refuted the plea of intimidation with which the Jews sought to terrify him—for from such a king as was this suffering King, the Emperor could apprehend no danger; at least, to such a conclusion Pilate must have come, whose eyes were not opened to see that, in very truth, the time should come when Cæsar's world-sovereignty must fall at the feet of King Jesus. The bare thought of the Emperor's displeasure threw Pilate into such a state of alarm and consternation that he lost all self-command. And at this moment, too, the assailant of his soul doubtless lost no time in whispering the suggestion, "Thou hast done thy very utmost for this Man, who after all is only a Jew, and one to whom thou art not in the least bound; he may be innocent;—who knows?—since his whole nation hate him;—who can tell whether he is so innocent as he seems to be? He appears to be more than a man, there is something like the gods about him;—yet—who can tell whether he may not be an enthusiast, as others have been before him; or indeed whether—there are such things as God, and another world, and *truth*; whether thy old idea after all may not be the right one; at all events it is better to take the certain instead of the uncertain; it is better not to run the risk of losing the Emperor's favour (and he is, as thou knowest, a suspicious tyrant, and the knowledge, too, of old misdeeds might easily come to

his ear!)—certainly the favour of a visible god is better than the favour of a doubtful God; and then see, too, what can the God whose Son this Jew pretends to be, do for His Son? And even if all that were not true, thou art surely innocent respecting him: the rulers of his people must certainly be better judges than thou, as to whether, according to their law, he is guilty of death; thus, in delivering him to be crucified, thou art wholly free from blame, whilst, if thou dost release him, thou art probably found guilty of a breach of trust towards the Emperor!"

Ver. 13-16. "*When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat, in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King. But they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him! crucify Him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar. Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified.*"

Who can further venture to say what was passing in Pilate's mind as *he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat*. This was the critical moment. Therefore St. John remarks the precise hour, which could never be forgotten by him; it was six o'clock in the morning; and he adds, "*It was the preparation of the Passover*"—meaning thereby to signify, that He who was now being given up to the soldiers to be crucified is the Passover Lamb, sacrificed for us.

Full of inward rage against the Jews who had been the cause of this the most miserable day of his life, Pilate now exclaims with bitter scorn, "*Behold your King!*" And when they shriek out in answer, "*Away with Him, away with Him! crucify Him!*" he asks in repeated scorn, "*Shall I crucify your King?*" Do ye allow, then, that your King must have a cross for a throne? The chief priests doubtless felt acutely the scorn of the heathen governor; but they heard not the voice of

God, which, through Pilate's mouth, was again and again charging it upon their conscience that they were wilfully thrusting from them their King.

We are horrified at this pitch of obduracy. And it is a wholesome horror, if it leads us to shrink back from the *sin* which is most properly guilty of the murder of Jesus. That sin is hypocritical, self-righteous legal pride. Let us also take to heart what Rambach says: "As here Pilate would violently force Christ upon the Jews as their King, even though they, with might and main, were thrusting Him from them, so in like manner does God deal with many a sinner; He not only pressing offers to him His mercy, and that repeatedly, but He, as it were, forces it upon him. But how often have we so dealt with the convictions, the warnings, the corrections of God's faithful Spirit, which we have felt working in our conscience, that we have in fact cried out *Crucify!* in respect to them, and have sought to rid ourselves of them out of tenderness to our flesh, when we ought much rather to have crucified our wicked passions."

"*We have no king but Caesar?*" the chief priests answer, thus pronouncing their own sentence. So far does their hatred against Jesus go, that they renounce their promised Christ, the Messiah, the Hope of Israel, and blasphemously reverse their old boast: "Israel has no King but God." The Emperor, whom at other times they mortally hated, they now desire to be their King; they will have none else. Rather the most cruel tyrant than a King for poor sinners. And so it happened to them, both now and afterwards (Acts xvii. 7). The Lord, their God and King, left them desolate, and delivered them into the hands of the Romans. It was on a Passover Feast that the Emperor Titus destroyed their city, and trod under foot the covenant-people, and scattered them abroad throughout the whole world. And to this day they have no king, but bear the oppressive yoke of foreign rule. Ah! if they would

only confess with repentance, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother Joseph!"

At length Pilate pronounces sentence. John does not give the words, but merely says, "*Then delivered he Him unto them to be crucified.*" But it is very possible that what is related in an apocryphal gospel may be true, that the sentence was so worded that all the guilt of it should rest upon the Jews.

Thus then is Pilate fallen; fallen at last, because he prefers to have the emperor whose kingdom is of this world as his friend, rather than the King whose kingdom is not from hence. The prize, for which he staked his soul, never became his. Some three years afterwards, he was removed by the legate of Syria, and then banished by the emperor to Gaul. Meeting with still severer treatment from the succeeding emperor, he is said in consequence to have destroyed himself; whilst others affirm that he was beheaded under Nero. It is easy to conceive that Pilate may at last have followed in the steps of Judas; for he too could never have been able to erase from his heart the flaming characters, "Jesus loved me, and I delivered Him to be crucified."

And wouldst thou know who the Cæsar is, for whom vain souls have such a fear that, in order not to lose his friendship, they will rather tear asunder the very last cords which still bind them to Christ? This Cæsar is the world, it is public opinion. The faithful friends and confessors of Christ must be ready to bear Christ's *shame*. But shame, the vain, world-bewitched heart shrinks back from with terror. Yes, if believing Christians were those whom the world honours, how many a one would become a Christian; but as it is, because only thus can men be the Cæsar's friend, they mount the judgment seat to condemn Christ. And yet, what a sorry friend is this Cæsar—the world, just as disappointing as was Pilate's Cæsar in Rome! He never gives thee that for the sake of which thou dost cling to him, and the truth of that, this and every son of perdition can but too well testify. It is a settled truth, "They

which hasten after another god,"—literally, which *buy for* themselves another god—"shall have great trouble" (Ps. xvi. 4). They are cheated out of their purchase-money in this world, and out of their eternal salvation in the world to come.

Up, my soul, and decide for the Lord Jesus, the best of Friends ; delay not thy decision so long as Pilate did his ; give thyself to Him who is thy King, and whose shame is more glorious than any crown of worldly honour ; give thyself up to Him to take entire possession of thee ; do it to-day, unreservedly, for ever.

The Walk of Sorrow.

CHAPTER XIX. 16, 17.

WE now behold the Lamb of God going to the place of Its slaughter, faint and sick, sinking beneath the burden which It bears, full of shame and pain. He had already wearied His feet by many thousand wearisome steps for sinners during His three and thirty years' passage through the world. To-day He is taking His last walk, and it is His hardest, but also the most full of blessing to us ; His footsteps drop salvation.

Ver. 16, 17. "*And they took Jesus, and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha.*"

After sentence of death had been pronounced, the Jews hastened in tumultuous haste to lead Jesus to the place of execution. Pilate allowed them to have their will, in spite of the existing law, that ten days should elapse between the condemnation and the execution of criminals. So it behoved to be, in order that the paschal Lamb might be sacrificed on the very day of the Passover.

They took Jesus. The four executioners told off for the crucifixion, soldiers of the Roman legion, laid hold on Jesus with their *hands*. He was *delivered* into their hands, as He had prophesied. With their *hearts* the chief priests and the people likewise took Him. Thus did He submit to be taken and led to the place of slaughter, refreshed by the thought of the angels which henceforth should take His redeemed ones, and bear them to His bosom.

They led Him forth out of the city. Oh, a long, weary, painful way! From the hall of judgment to Golgotha there were (we are told) 1321 steps. The Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. xiii. 12) teaches us that in His being led forth out of the city, there was contained a divine mystery. We read, "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the camp." Thus, also, through this particular circumstance, was He set forth as the Sin-offering, in whom the Old Testament types had found their fulfilment (Lev. iv. 12; xvi. 27; Num. xix. 3). He, the spotless Holy One, who was sprinkled with His own precious blood, was shadowed forth in that red and spotless sacrificial heifer, whose flesh, being burnt to ashes, was scattered upon the unclean that they might be clean. In the fire of God's wrath, to which He gave Himself up in our flesh, He submitted of His great love to be wholly consumed, that His blood might be for us an inexhaustible fountain of purification. As He trod the way, to suffer without the gate, His troubled soul was strengthening itself by these prophetic types. Patiently He accepted the shame of being led along through the streets of the city, as one accursed. As a King did He make His *solemn entrance* on Palm Sunday; as a King, too, was He making His *solemn departure* on Good Friday; then amidst huzzas, now amidst lamentations—then and now as a meek and gentle King, a Helper. He well knew that by this "going forth" He was obtaining for His own an entrance into the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, the glorious Paradise, which in Adam was closed against us. And if we are looking for this future city, let us follow obediently the apostle's injunction, which he adds in ver. 13, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach,"—the reproach which is certain to come to all who for Christ's sake, in their love and longing, go forth out of the world.

And He bore His cross. The two malefactors also bore their crosses, for such was the custom ; but His burden was heavier than theirs ; heavier, both outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly, for His back was lacerated, His arms wealed with stripes, and all His limbs aching with a twelve hours' torture. They, doubtless, too, chose for Him the largest cross, as being the arch-malefactor. Inwardly, for on His shoulders lay the sin of every sinner, and they were weighed down by the burden of God's judgment, as well as by the accursed tree. Oh, my soul, what a sight is this ! Thou art amazed, even at seeing thy Lord in former years bearing heavy beams of timber in the service of his foster-father ; and here, in the service of His heavenly Father, He is bearing to Golgotha the heavy beams of the cross, with which to raise the altar whereon He is to be offered up. Isaac once bore to Mount Moriah the wood for the burnt-offering ; and behold here is a greater than Isaac, the true Lamb, whom God has provided to Himself for the Burnt-offering.

What fresh scorn and derision may His tormentors have heaped upon Him as He walked along, thus bending under the shameful cross ! And yet is this cross the sign of His honour and glory. The government is upon His shoulder, Isaiah prophesies (chap. ix. 6). Through the cross thus bound upon His shoulders, He attained to the victorious possession of His kingdom, for He was *lifted up* from the earth (John xii. 32). "He bore His cross, says Chrysostom, as a sign of triumph, for with His cross, that sword of love's vengeance, he has conquered the Devil, and obtained the government over all things."

The fact that Christ bore His cross for our eternal peace, has bound *us* to His cross. His action here says to us the same as in another place His words : "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." As the Head, so the members. As Christ bore His cross, taking it willingly upon Himself, and, as it were, embracing it, so should Christians do with the tribulations, which, for Christ's sake, are laid upon them, and which, for that reason, bear the honourable

name of *cross*. Ungodly men have many calamities, but no cross ; and if they call them by that name, it is an abuse of the word. For what do I confess when I say, *my cross* ? This, that what *I* am suffering, my Lord Jesus has suffered *for me* ; and that, as a member of His body, I am made partaker of His sufferings in the flesh, in order that hereafter I may be made partaker of His glory. Happy are the cross-bearers ! The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon them (1 Pet. iv. 14). Some one has called the cross of Christ a star with the rays taken of ; and so may the cross of Christians be styled ; for

“ The cross of Jesus still is fair,
Though reason sees no radiance there.”

Or, as Claudius expresses it—

“ Tend well the cross—no flower is found,
Yet on that plant rich fruits abound.”

In connection with this subject of the cross, allow me to relate a pleasing story :—There was a rich man in the West Indies, who had a number of poor blacks in his plantation as slaves. One of these slaves was converted to the Lord Jesus, and began to pray. This was what his master could not endure. The world will put up with a great deal, but *praying* it cannot stand, no more now than of old, when it threatened blind Bartimæus that he should hold his peace. And so this master threatened his poor slave, but to no effect, for he could not help crying out all the more. Then was he beaten with cudgels, and flogged with whips, and the negro's plaster, vinegar and pepper, was applied to the wounds. For all that he went on praying ; and so it continued. Every Monday many stripes were inflicted upon the praying slave, and every time he protested that he never could leave off praying. For about two years he bore his cross ; when, one Monday morning, his master said to him, “ Ned, tell me the truth for once, what hast thou got for thy stupid obstinacy ? What good does thy praying do thee ? Art thou really *happy* with all these blows, and scars, and wounds upon thy back, with thy heavy work and scanty meals ? “ Yes,

massa," the slave answered, "I am happy ; I desire nothing better ; I should like every one to be as well off as I am ; only my sore back, that I give to no one" (Read Acts xxvi. 29). See, dear Christian, this poor negro understood the comfort contained in the word, in Jesus' deed of love : *He bore his cross.*

There they Crucified Him.

CHAPTER XIX. 17-24.

Ver. 17, 18. *“And He went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha : where they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.”*

Thus the Lamb of God stands at the place of slaughter. The hill *Golgotha*, the place of a skull, so called from being covered with the skulls of executed malefactors, is now consecrated, through God's deeds upon it, to be the holiest of all hills ; and we think most especially on Golgotha, when we say with the Psalmist, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.”

Certainly that of which Golgotha's rocks speak is everywhere to be found, wherever a worshipper of the crucified One performs his devotions, everywhere where a Christian heart, in faith, embraces his Saviour ; but indescribable, indeed, must be the feelings of the pilgrim, when he can kneel and worship on the very spot where Christ, on His holy cross, wrought out the deliverance of sinners. And this place is still known. In the midst of the ruins of Jerusalem, after its destruction, the first love of the Christians found out again the place Golgotha. As a pilgrim to Jerusalem of our own time, Schubert says : “The timid little band of disciples visited repeatedly the holy place, like doves, who ever know the way to their home.” And when, sixty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Emperor Adrian, in order to vex the Christians, built on Golgotha a temple to Venus, his

hatred was only destined to serve to point out the way to love ; for it was the very remains of this heathen temple which afterwards enabled the mother of Constantine, the imperial pilgrim Helena, to discover the spot upon which to build the Church of the holy Sepulchre. Several times has this church been destroyed by the Mahomedans ; but it has always risen up afresh out of its ruins. The inner chapel of the holy Sepulchre is supposed, with great probability, to be in the original rock where Christ's body rested ; also the rock of Golgotha, with the place of the cross, is still standing, covered over with marble, eastward, in the wide halls of the Temple. But the keys to this church on Golgotha are still in the possession of the Turks, and false doctrine dishonours its altar. And will it be so until the Lord shall come to His holy city ? Will He, when He comes, find confessors of His cross on the place where He once hung upon the cross ?

The whole history of the Passion is woven out of prophecy and fulfilment. This we have already seen in repeated instances. And the deeper that the Lord descends into the valley of humiliation, the richer and brighter—and often realised with wonderful exactness even to the smallest particular—does that light surround Him : “That the Scripture might be fulfilled.” Moses and Elias and all the prophets surround Him as in a chorus, and testify that this Jesus is the Christ. Wherever thy eye turns on Golgotha, thou seest everywhere Scripture fulfilled. It can not be otherwise ; for the desire and anticipation of every sinner sighing for redemption, from the time of the first sinner onward, have been in the spirit turned towards Golgotha, and every promise and pledge of God's own heartfelt mercy has guaranteed this great deed of God on Golgotha. This too we have already seen, that the prophecies which were fulfilled in Him even to the smallest particular—though according to God's measure, what is great or small ?—were as a rod and staff to the Son of Man Himself, when wandering in the dark valley ; and when could He have been in greater need of such a support than when hanging on the cross ? But we have a sure—or as the Apostle

literally says: we have *more sure* the word of prophecy, the eternal foundation of which we see revealed in the light of its fulfilment, and we do well to take heed thereto (2 Peter i. 19). In this chapter thou wilt find prophecy fulfilled in the drink of vinegar and gall which they offered the Lord, in His being lifted upon the cross, in His being nailed to the cross, in His hanging between the two thieves, in His prayer for His murderers, in the parting of His garments among the soldiers.

There they crucified Him. In these few words the Evangelists announce the greatest and the most astounding transaction which has ever taken place in the world. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the centre round which His whole Passion turns. Let us tarry at the foot of the cross, and see—may God really grant us to see—the crucified One with the eye of the Galatians, as if He were even now crucified before our eyes (Gal. iii. 1).

They have set the cross upright, and fastened it into the ground. They have stripped the Saviour naked. They now lay hold of Him and raise Him up, they place Him on the peg which is fastened to the beam of the cross like a saddle, they press His lacerated back firmly against the post of the cross, and force His wounded, thorn-crowned head upright, they stretch out His two arms, and bind them with cords to the two ends of the cross-beam; they then take great nails and drive them through the palms of His hands; finally, they lastly stretch out His feet, and nail them to the post either side by side, or one over the other. Thus the Lord of Glory now hangs upon the cross amidst terrible, inconceivable suffering.

O Lord, if it was necessary that Thou shouldest die in order to redeem us, could it not have been by an easier, a less bitter death? Couldst Thou not have been spared these pangs of a death the most cruel and bitter of any? "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things,*" is His own answer to this. He behoved to endure the *cross*. St. Paul means by the *cross* something over and above other forms of dying, when he says: "He was obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross.*" The

suffering of the cross, this unspeakable torment of being tortured by death in every limb, and yet not to be able to die—is it not an exact image of the pains of hell, which we have deserved, the pangs of death which shall gnaw and torture the damned to all eternity? Because then Christ would die the death of the accursed and swallow it up in victory, therefore He chose this manner of death, which most clearly sets Him forth as our Surety and Propitiator, even in the sufferings of His holy body. It was His will to feel to the full the sting of death, to lay one limb after the other upon the sacrificial altar, and draught after draught to drink up the Father's cup. So the Apostle says: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a *curse* for us; for it is written: Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Therefore then He endured the cross, because He desired to yield up His pure sacrificial body to be under the curse in our stead. This word of the Apostle divides asunder the very joints and marrow. *Cross* and *curse* go together; but so also do *cross* and *blessing*. Christ became a curse for us, in our stead, and out of love to us. If He shrank back with horror from our curse, yet through His great love He overcame this horror. He carried away all curse from the accursed earth, when He carried up to the cross the world's sin in His own body, to become a sacrifice for it, that we, instead of the curse, might inherit the blessing; for "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "We, on account of our sins, are a curse, and under God's displeasure: Christ the only-begotten Son of God is full of grace and truth. How comes He then on the cross? Why does He cast Himself under the curse of God? Why does He submit to crucifixion? For our sakes, Paul says: *He was made a curse for us*. It was His will to bear God's wrath, and to pay for our sins, that we might inherit the blessing, that is, might receive the Holy Spirit, be made free from sin and become the children of God. Who therefore would take offence at the cross? Who would count such a death as shameful? Who would not rather

thank God from his heart that His Son does hang on the cross, and does take upon Himself the curse which, on account of our sins, belongs to us? He hangs there as an accursed man, hated by God, upon whom God inflicts shame and trouble and anguish. Paul says that this happens for my sake and for thine, that we might inherit the blessing. For if the curse had continued to rest upon us, we must have been without the blessing; but there the blessed seed comes, and the curse which rests upon us, He takes off from us upon Himself, and throws upon us the blessing which He Himself has. *Therefore because for our sakes He behoved and willed to be made a curse, there was no other death so appropriate for Him to suffer as this death on the tree, concerning which God's word declares, that it is an accursed death.* Learn well there this distinction, not to judge according to what thou seest with thine eyes, but according to what the word of God tells thee. The eyes are offended at a death so shameful, so accursed by God; but for us it is a blessed death, which takes off the curse from us, and brings us instead God's blessing. The tree which in itself is an accursed tree, is for us a blessed tree, a noble, precious altar, upon which the Son of God offers Himself up to God His Father, for our sin, letting us see that He is the true eternal Priest, who, for this end, comes to the accursed tree and makes it a blessed altar, that we might be freed from sins, obtain God's favour, and become His children." (Luther.)

When they were lifting Him up on the cross, when they were piercing His hands and His feet, and the floods of suffering which were seeking to drown Him, were now pressing in upon His soul (Psa. lxi. 2), then, in His great anguish, He sought and appropriated to Himself the consolation of Scripture. He Himself in fact had testified: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Into this "must" of eternal love He plunged. We too will do the like, and for a moment will remain standing

by this discourse which the Lord makes concerning His lifting up on the cross.

The brazen (fiery-like) serpent, which at the command of God Moses lifted up for the benefit of the people who were bitten by fiery serpents, was a prophetic type of the crucified Christ. A serpent—a poor, inconsistent image for the Son of God, reason thinks. But such a thought is false; for, looked at with the eye of faith, it is a particularly appropriate and fitting image. For as the brazen serpent was the image of the cause of destruction amongst the people of Israel, so is the crucified Saviour the image of the cause of our destruction—the *image of sin*. And who, than He, could be more appropriately this? He was not *sin*, but truly the *image* of sin; even as the brazen serpent was innocent, and merely the representation of death. “God *made Him to be sin for us* who knew no sin,” says St. Paul (2 Cor. v. 21); He has appeared “*in the likeness of sinful flesh*” (Rom. viii. 3). In Him is pictured forth how sin is punished according to God’s justice. That which the Prophet Isaiah says of the people smitten for their sins, has befallen Him, “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores, they have not been closed, neither bound’ up, neither mollified with ointment.” This describes Him as He appears on the cross.

The Israelites were to look upon the brazen serpent, and live; the sin of His people, in consequence of which the fiery serpents were sent, God was willing to forgive on the condition that they should look upon the brazen serpent-figure, as being the death of death. The look, indeed, did not alone work this healing, but it was the word of promise and faith in that word which did it. And when thou in faith dost raise thine eyes to the cross of Jesus, in the faith which says, “*For me, for my sins*, Jesus is the death of *my* death;” then thou too shalt live, thy sin shall be done away, and thou shalt be righteous and for ever happy. Yes, as the children of the old Covenant, when

they offered a sacrifice, laid their hands upon the animal, as much as to say: "This Lamb am I," so do we by faith lay our hands on the Lamb of God which is offered up on the cross, and say, "For me!"

But let us look still further. The crucified Saviour now fulfils yet another promise of Scripture. He fulfils the gospel which was given to the first sinners, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; but the serpent should bruise His heel. See there, He is now bruising the serpent's head; He is putting an end to his dominion over sinners; for He is taking from him all his armour wherein he trusted; He is removing, through His atonement, the guilt of sin, depriving the devil of his rights and claims to possess the world, and destroying his works. Therefore, as Ambrose so beautifully says, the form of the cross is that of a sword with its point downward; above is the hilt, below is the point thrust through the head of the serpent.

But the Lord feels in His heel the serpent's bite: wounds of nails are burning in His feet. Whilst suffering this, may He not have silently breathed David's complaint in that psalm (Ps. xxii.) which he wrote, whilst in spirit, we might almost say, he was hanging on the cross of Christ. In the midst of enduring all the other pangs of the cross, both in body and soul, he cries out, "They pierced my hands and my feet!" As the price of our deliverance out of the devil's power, the Lord patiently submitted to this gnawing of the serpent; it was the last, which was killing Him, and us with Him; henceforward all the piercings of the old serpent are not unto death in the case of them who are in Christ Jesus.

The old writers have some very beautiful thoughts upon the cross of Christ. There in Paradise, say they, it was a glorious tree which was the cause of our falling into sin and death; but here it is an old, dried-up tree, yes, an accursed tree, which is the cause of our deliverance from sin and our having eternal life. Thus Irenæus, "Christ has loosed the ban of human dis-

obedience, which had its commencement in a tree ; having been obedient even to the death of the cross, He had, by the stretching out of His hands, healed the sickness, which through Adam's outstretched hand had come upon us." His cross, they further say, is the ladder by which we mount towards heaven ; it is the throne of grace where the sinner finds forgiveness ; it is the triumphal car of the General of God's host. The crucified Jesus extends His arms, as a sign that he will thrust none away, but will gladly receive all, and gather all to Himself ; as He Himself promised : " I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." But He also spreads out his arms to accept with willing love all the pains to which He submitted for our salvation. " He empties himself out fully and entirely to us ; for so great was His love towards us, loving us as He only could love, offering Himself wholly to our love, giving us whatever He was, whatever He could, and what He could not in words express ; since His love is inexpressible, He would fain declare it by the posture of His body " (J. Gerhard). His nails have fastened the handwriting which was against us to the cross (Col. ii. 14) ; it no longer stands against us, but is a receipted bill, an evidence of satisfaction rendered. In old paintings divine Justice paints the first nail, divine Mercy the second, divine Peace the third. In Christ's wounds righteousness and peace kiss each other, and peace streams forth upon poor sinners. Through His wounds we are healed. " O blessed Lord Jesus, Thou wast pleased to be wounded in the head, that Thou mightest make amends for all our sinful purposes ; in the hands, that Thou mightest make good all our neglected works ; in the feet, that Thou mightest make atonement for all our impure and earthly propensities ; in the heart, that Thou mightest atone for all our vain and wicked lusts ; Thou wast pleased to be wounded in Thy whole body, that Thou mightest heal our whole life and conversation." (Anselm.)

But yet all the benefits of the cross flow to us from this one, "*He was made a curse for us.*" This is the main point. Give

then to us, O Lord, Thou wounded heart, give to us, too, broken hearts, that we may learn to believe the mystery of our redemption in Thy cross! *For us, for us*, Jesus Christ hangs on the accursed and bitter tree; and when from the bottom of our hearts we can say, in the words of the hymn, "My love is hanging on the cross," then He hangs not there alone, but we hang there with Him (2 Cor. v. 14; Gal. ii. 20).

One of our old preachers of the cross (Brenz) thus exhorts all who in spirit go to Golgotha: "Let us reflect that Christ is not lifted up *alone* on the cross, but that in His Person He has carried up on the tree all who believe in Him. For we must not merely consider Him in His outward bodily form, but rather in the truth of His spiritual body. Of this spiritual body Christ is Himself the Head, the Church the body, and every believer in Him a member. But Christ did not ascend on the cross imperfect and mutilated, but with His whole body, that together with Him His whole Church might be crucified, not indeed to the eyes of the world, but yet truly in the sight of God. And this crucifixion of the whole Church is of such a character before God, that all who have not hung with Christ upon the cross, will also have no share in His glorious resurrection to eternal happiness. At the time when it happened, we did not consciously share in this crucifixion; now, however, we must do so; not so much in order to feel its bitterness as to become partakers of its healing. And this we shall do, first, when we confess, that on account of our sins we deserved to hang thus on the cross; secondly, when we believe that Christ has taken upon Himself this curse of the cross for us accursed sinners, that in Him we might obtain blessing, and righteousness, and salvation; finally, when we patiently suffer, for Christ's sake and in Christ, all that God lays upon us,—on which account even *our* sufferings are called the sufferings of *Christ* (2 Cor. i. 5). Then, brethren, God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Amen.

Jesus is crucified *between* two malefactors (*thieves*, as Matthew and Mark call them), as if He were a robber-king; and these partners in His crucifixion we may regard as representing the whole human race. St. Mark would have us here again recognise the Father's hand, which ordered every single circumstance in the crucifixion of His Son, though delivered into the hands of the Gentiles; for he expressly adds, "*The Scripture was fulfilled which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors.*" This passage we have already considered—it is from Isaiah's great crucifixion-chapter. Should it surprise us, that He who suffers *for* the ungodly is crucified *amongst* the ungodly?

St. Mark also remarks: *It was the third hour when they crucified Him*—about nine o'clock in the morning, according to our reckoning—three hours after Pilate had delivered Him up. Thus six hours did the Lord hang upon the cross before He died, from nine o'clock in the morning till three o'clock in the afternoon.

Ver. 19-22. "*And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that He said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.*"

Above the head of the Crucified One they had fastened the usual inscription, declaring the cause of His death. This had been composed by Pilate, and ran thus: "*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews;*" or as St. Matthew has it: "*This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.*" What Pilate meant by this we know from His previous conduct. He meant to mock the Jews. But forasmuch as this man, otherwise so weak and fickle, will not consent to alter the inscription to a form more palatable to the offended chief priests, we have even in this

circumstance to acknowledge an especial providence of God. The inscription must give that name to Jesus, by which the Prophets had long before extolled Him. The righteous Branch of David, the King, who should be called "The Lord our Righteousness," on His cross He reveals *how* He "executes justice on the earth" (Jer. xxiii. 5, 6). The cross is the rightful throne of His government. In the crucified Jesus those good tidings prove true which shall be published to Zion: "Thy God reigneth" (Isa. lii. 7). Yes, Jesus of Nazareth, the despised "Nazarene" (Matt. ii. 23), is this promised King of the Jews; He *is* the Christ, and *therefore* He is crucified. The inscription contains the true cause of His death. It therefore could not be altered. In the three languages which were then the most widely spread, the inscription proclaims at once the royalty of God's Anointed One, and also the *name*, *Jesus*, at which every knee shall bow; for by no other name is there salvation. "His Name shall endure for ever; His Name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed." And the King whom men were slaying on the cross, on the very cross, has shown that He is a King—a King of love and a King of power, who obtains His kingdom by bleeding and dying. "Hold thy peace! If the world mocks God by making *His* King *their* crucified One, God also mocks them by making their crucified One His King." (Ahlfeld.)

Many of the Jews read this title, St. John says, because Golgotha was nigh to Jerusalem, and the people who had come from all parts to celebrate the Passover, had only a Sabbath-day's journey to get to it. And perhaps many a Jew carried away in his heart a look from his crucified King. This was what the chief priests did not want; and on that account also they disliked the testimony given in the title. At the present day the testimony of Jesus, the crucified Christ, is proclaimed far and wide in two hundred languages. In so many tongues is the sweet Name of Jesus invoked and extolled.

We, however, will not do what even Pilate dared not do; we will not speak equivocally and say, Jesus *said* that He was Christ. The craftiness of those false teachers who veil their unbelief under the delusive mask of a similar, "He said," is for all times branded in the proposition of the chief priests. Such preachers as these practise "fearful jugglery," Luther says. Oh, how earnestly did he bid men beware of their seductions.

Ver. 23, 24. "*Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.*"

To the shame which Jesus has already suffered on the cross, is now added the *parting of His garments*. He covered the nakedness of the sinners who were crucifying Him with His intercession: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (See St. Luke.) Now He endures this ignominious mockery, and comforts Himself in the thought, how many were those pardoned sinners whose faith would shine forth dazzlingly arrayed in the garments of His salvation.

It was in mockery of Christ that they thus parted His garments; it should appear as if all that the King of the Jews had left behind Him had fallen into their hands. Their motive could hardly have been covetousness alone; for the poor Nazarene wore no gorgeous robes. Luther says: "I imagine that it was not for the sake of profit or gain that the soldiers parted the garments among them, but because they wished to have some good sport and make game of the matter, as a sign that it was now quite up with this Christ, that He was as one who was

wholly laid waste, lost, and blotted out; one altogether forgotten as the most despised and rejected of all men, who, besides having His body and life taken from Him, could not even bequeath His clothes as a remembrance to His relations." The Holy Ghost likewise, in the 22d Psalm, points out this parting of the garments as bitter shame and the threshold of death, putting at the very end of the description of the sufferings of the cross: "*They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture;*" first the upper garments, and afterwards the long vesture, upon the removal of which the body is entirely exposed; there is therefore now nothing further to take but life. In order now that the Scripture might be accurately and minutely fulfilled, the soldiers must take occasion from the circumstance of the vesture being not sewn, but woven in one piece, to draw lots for it. And this the chief priests beheld! Before their very eyes was taking place that which Scripture had long ago described concerning the Messiah, and yet their eyes were closed fast in slumber, and did not open. It is now as then. Fulfilled prophecies proclaim Jesus of Nazareth to *our* scribes as the Saviour; but many amongst them believe not. Wonders, whilst they strengthen a willing faith, do not force men to believe. The faith of the *disciples*, on the other hand, was strengthened through the prophecies which in Christ are Amen; their heart burned within them, whilst the Lord was opening to them the Scriptures. And with not less astonishment at the faithfulness of divine wisdom than at the rudeness of the soldiers, St. John exclaims: *These things therefore the soldiers did.* And let us draw abundant refreshment from those prophetic words, which like bright stars shine forth from on high into the night of darkness with which the Son of God on Golgotha is encompassed.

St. Matthew adds: "*And sitting down they watched Him there.*" These watchers were placed in order that the disciples might not come and take Jesus down from the cross. But in

obedience to God's will they were there as witnesses of the miracles on Golgotha; and that the soul of the centurion of the band might be saved. For all who passed this day under the cross of Christ it might have been a day of grace. But for many it was lost. Some there were perhaps who slept whilst Christ was dying for them.

The Lord's Charge to His Disciple.

CHAPTER XIX. 25-27.

AMONGST the crowd assembled round the cross of Jesus there were some souls who loved Him. Such were the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee, and had ministered to Him, *i. e.*, had contributed to His wants out of their substance (Luke viii. 3). These, Matthew says, were beholding afar off. But some of them approached nearer to the cross.

Ver. 25. "*Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas (Alphæus), and Mary Magdalene.*"

St. Mark also adds Salome, the mother of James and John. Would she to-day desire a place for her sons on the right hand and on the left of Jesus? Yes, the place of the pardoned thief! John was the only one of all the disciples who was standing by the cross with these women; the *mother* of James and Joses was there, but not the *sons*, nor yet Cleophas. In the weakest instruments there was the richest display of the love which is stronger than death. The floods of scorn and ill-treatment poured out by the savage horde which surrounded the cross had no power to extinguish the love of these female disciples. Also on the resurrection morning it was the love of these women which was first awake, and which was the first to be comforted by the gracious manifestation of the Risen One.

Mary, the mother of Jesus stood by the cross. She saw her Son, her own and Israel's Trust, mocked, tortured, condemned to death on the accursed tree. Then did she feel the sword

piercing her soul, of which Simeon had prophesied to her, when she presented the Child Jesus in the Temple. "She sees Him hung up, and cannot come to Him; she sees Him fastened and cannot loose Him; she sees Him streaming with blood and cannot wipe it away; she sees His whole body in wounds and cannot bind them up; she hears Him complain: I thirst! and cannot give Him to drink. As many as are the sufferings of Christ's body, so many are the wounds in His mother's heart; as many as are the piercing nails and the burning thorns in the flesh of her Son, so many are the arrows which through the Virgin's eyes are penetrating her heart." (J. Gerhard.)

Mary now felt the pangs of child-birth—she who without pain had borne her Son: in her should Christ be born. Whilst all the thoughts and hopes of her sinful nature were wholly destroyed under the cross, grace could unravel and make clear to her all the promises concerning this her Son (Luke i. 32, 33; ii. 31, 32; Matt. i. 21), which she had faithfully "kept and pondered in her heart." The word of God was her refuge; but for that she would have sunk under her sorrow. Even now she had just heard the Lord—as even the thief called Him—bestow Paradise upon this sinner by virtue of the holy *Verily, verily*, which to her ears was so familiar, and promise that he should enter it this very day. From this Mary too drew refreshment and comfort. Only she might perhaps have sighed: "Oh, that I too could remain at His side, and be with Him in Paradise! How shall I live in this desolate world without Him?" And the Lord saw into these thoughts; for although His eyes were looking up to His Father, to whom He was offering Himself a sacrifice, yet what John says of Him was true: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." He, who to be the Consolation of the whole world dies upon the cross, would fain also console His mother whom He loved, and whom He obediently served in the days of His flesh. The thing which He loved best in the world He left as a legacy to her; for what read we?

Ver. 26, 27. "*When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*"

Woman He calls her, not *Mother*. Some old writers say, that He perhaps avoided the sweet name of mother, that He might not lacerate her heart with such a tender word of farewell; others hear in Christ thus speaking the *Seed of the woman*. Yet the most obvious view is that the Lord, through the very name *woman*, would direct His mother into *that* love which knows Christ no more after the flesh (2 Cor. v. 16), and would also thereby declare to us that in the midst of His work of atonement He felt Himself bound equally close to all sinners, that He was not nearer to His mother than to thee and me.

"*Woman, behold thy son!*" Thus, then, Mary still would abide in the bosom of love; Christ indeed was about to go from her, but in the disciple whom He loved He would still remain with her, in order still to show towards her the same devoted filial love, which for the space of three and thirty years had been His wont. Mary, thou blessed among women, yea, the Lord is with thee! The Son of thy womb is enthroned for ever at the Father's right hand, thy King, thy God, and thy Lord; and the disciple who has lain on His breast, now treads in His steps, and becomes thy son!

And the disciple? If he ever felt what it meant to be the disciple whom the Lord loved, he felt it at this moment when the Lord turned His gaze upon him and said, "*Behold thy mother!*" It is hardly a command; it is a precious gift, a blessed permission; or if it shall be a command, it yet is *not grievous* (1 John v. 3). To be permitted to love his Lord in Mary the mother of his Lord, and to become the Lord's brother in a more especial sense, to stand with Him, if I may so say, in especial friendship; in converse with the Virgin who had carried the King of heaven in her womb, who had borne Him, who

had held Him on her knees and tended Him in the carpenter's house at Nazareth ; in converse with her, daily henceforth, with adoring hands, to be permitted to "handle" the divine-human walk of the Saviour, lovingly to sink deep into the grace and truth, the light and life, of the incarnate Word, and thus to become a proclaimer of the depths of the divine love, and the seer of the triumphant walk of the Lamb in His kingdom until the day of His coming—it was to this that Christ had chosen the disciple whom He loved. And the disciple, who *from that hour* took Mary to his own home (before the Lord's eyes he led her away, and returned not back to the cross until he had sheltered her safe from the terrors of those three hours of darkness), it surely never entered into his head that he was showing forth *his* love to the Lord in taking care of this mother who was given to him ; no, that he was the disciple whom *the Lord* loved, this delight of his life was sealed to him in the testament which bequeathed to him Mary to be his mother. Until her death, eleven years after, as we are told, Mary dwelt in John's house at Jerusalem. But John, the old writers say, lived long on the earth, according to the promise of the fourth commandment.

This third word from the cross has a meaning for us too. Luther says, "We must allow that this word, although Christ spoke it to Mary and John alone, yet gives an universal command to all Christians and to the whole Church, that because Christ hangs on the cross to redeem us all through His death, we should be all amongst one another as mother and son, heartily loving one another, and so far as possible helping and counselling one another. That it therefore has the same meaning as the word which the Lord over and over again repeats at the last Supper, This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. For there is no deeper and higher love than that between mother and children." Yes, Christ gives from His cross a *new commandment* to believers, that they should love one another as members

of one family. *New* the commandment is, for it *gives* blessedness ; whilst the *old* commandment of love only *required* and promised blessedness as a reward. The command of the crucified Lord, Love one another ! in itself gives blessedness ; for His believers feel happy in the freedom of being permitted to love Him in return in the person of His followers—Him, who first loved us. Such was the bliss of John's love to Mary. "The Lord made a will on the cross," Ambrose says, "and John signed it."

And thou, dear Christian, thou surely knowest the question which from the cross the Saviour puts to thee, "This I do for thee ; what dost thou do for me ?" Well then, take thy stand under His cross ! He says to the disciple whom He loved, "*Behold thy mother !*" So He says likewise to thee, "*Behold thy mother, thy father, thy husband, thy wife, thy child ! Behold, that is the Church which I have loved, and have given Myself for ; behold these are thy fellow-sinners, whom I have redeemed with Mine own blood !*" Dost thou really *behold* what He calls upon thee to behold ? Be it thy will to behold it ! It is near to thee, and lies daily in thy way ; where love seeks Him, there she finds Him. And precious this is. "Oh, a generous testator is Christ, who gives His flesh for meat, His blood for drink, His soul for a ransom, His wounds for healing, His arms for a sanctuary, His cross for a shield, His pierced heart for a pledge of love, the water from His side for a bath, His sweat for medicine, His crown of thorns for adornment, His words for a witness, His life for a pattern, but His members for the recipients of the love of those whom He has loved." (Bernhard.)

The Three Last Hours on the Cross.

CHAPTER XIX. 28-30.

Ver. 28, 29. "*After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth.*"

The Lord's cry of anguish, *Eli, Eli!* (see Matt.) marked the highest pitch of His inward suffering. With this His heaviest trial of all, He had reached the limit and end of the whole labour of His soul. He again recovered and was refreshed; the sun recovered its shining again. This turning point St. John expresses in the words, *Jesus knew that all things were now accomplished.* The divine conflict was achieved; Jesus, forsaken of God, had yet held fast by God, had triumphantly fought His way through the host of infernal spirits into whose hands He was delivered, and had overcome the temptation, "Curse God and die!" He had retained His faith. "For not the deeds and the thoughts of sinners, did Christ take upon Himself, but the punishment and the debt of sin, that He might atone for it." (Brenz.)

"Thou wast my hope—Thou art my God—be not far from me, for trouble is near—Thou art holy." Thus praying, he had struggled His way through by faith again into His Father's bosom. And yet His soul thirsted to behold His Father's face, which He had beheld in eternal brightness before the foundation of the world. "I am weary of my crying, my throat is dry, mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. Hide not thy face from

thy servant, for I am in trouble ; hear me speedily !" (Ps. lxix.) This thirst of His soul for God, for the living God, had its counterpart in the burning thirst of His tortured, fainting, dying body. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint ; my heart also is like wax : it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws ; and Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death" (Ps. xxii.) This He was now experiencing ; and whilst His soul had already struggled through into victory, He felt all the more acutely the pangs of His suffering body. All His fearful bodily torture had not hitherto wrung from Him one single groan. He might, indeed, have borne His thirst, the winding up of His bodily pains also in silence—a Lamb that opened not His mouth—but that could not be ; for the Scripture must be fulfilled, and should be shown forth as fulfilled ; even this Scripture also, which prophesies of his *great thirst*, in that Psalm (lxix.), the fulfilment of which in Christ is so abundantly attested in the New Testament. And Jesus, although He knew that His cry of woe would only draw upon Him fresh pain and fresh scorn, yet, in holy reverence, submits Himself to the written word of God, and therefore completing all things that belonged to its fulfilment, He exclaims : "*I thirst !*" But not below did He direct the cry, "*I thirst !*" not to the spectators of His suffering, but above, to the Father. An esteemed witnesser of the cross thus expresses his astonishment at this thirst : "Then did all the cool brooks which trickle down from the heights of the rocks pause in their course, and then rushed headlong into the deep, loudly wailing because it was not permitted to them to assuage the thirst of their Creator." Men, however, give Him vinegar to drink in His great thirst. The hand which had directed even the smallest circumstance in the Son's Passion, had so ordered it, that a vessel with vinegar should be standing near the cross, ready for this service, as John takes care to observe. The Lord would not henceforth drink any more of the fruit of the vine, until the day of His Supper

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in the Kingdom of Glory ; therefore He permitted a sour draught of vinegar to be given Him to drink. He who filled the sponge with vinegar, and on the stalk of hyssop—it was so ordered that it *must* be hyssop (Ex. xii. 22)—pressed it to the holy mouth of Jesus, was moved in doing so by some degree of compassion ; for amongst people of low rank vinegar was commonly used as a cooling drink. Yet, when His companions scornfully cried out—and it was the last word of scorn which assailed the crucified one—“ *Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save Him !*” he drew back the sponge, and, from fear of man, joined in the railing of the rest.

With what a miserable potion did the Lord allow Himself to be refreshed, when He was thirsting with a thirst which had been kindled within Him by the fire of His love to sinners ! Behold, my soul, thy Saviour renounced the streams of Paradise, which stood at His command, and withdrew not His mouth from the sponge of vinegar ; but thee He will feed and refresh from springs of living water, and will pour out for thy thirst the sweet wine of joy ! Verily, He is worthy that we should give Him to drink of that for which He, the great Prince of Peace, thirsted, and still thirsts,—namely, those souls of ours which He has obtained for His own at such a bitter cost. “ *I thirst !*” so does Jesus Christ cry from the cross to all, to the whole world, whose atonement He has *accomplished*, and for whom He evermore is the propitiation ; and every faithful preacher prays in Christ’s stead for the satisfying of this thirst of the Saviour (2 Cor. v. 20). “ He thirsted for our thirst,” says Gregory of Nazianzus ; and John Arnd, in his True Christianity, says : “ When the Lord on the cross says, *I thirst !* it was for this that He thirsted, that He might awaken and find a holy, spiritual, heavenly thirst in us. For as He himself satisfies and quenches our spiritual hunger and thirst, so do we serve to satisfy His hunger and thirst, as He says in John iv. 34.” Well, then, we will give Him to drink in the same way as the Samaritan woman did ! “ I would cause Thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate” (Cant. viii. 2). “ But let us take heed lest we too

offer vinegar to the thirsting Jesus ! He thirsts for our salvation, for our conversion, for our love. They who waste the time of their calling, who are living securely in sin, and who reject the grace which is offered to them, do but present vinegar to Jesus instead of wine. He is waiting for us to bring Him sweet grapes ; should we then bring Him nothing but wild grapes ? Christ is thirsting in His members, He cries out in His poor ; but, alas, the drink of cold water is refused Him !" (Gerhard.)

Ver. 30. "*When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished : and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.*"

"*It is finished!*"—The drink of vinegar was the last bitterness which the Lord Jesus tasted in His suffering flesh. It was now enough. His work was at an end. The baptism from which He had so shrunk was now *accomplished* (Luke xii. 15). The one offering, which avails for ever, was offered ; everything that was to be purchased was purchased. All, all was fulfilled which holy Scripture had before announced concerning the sufferings which are in Christ. Now the door into His glory stood open for Him ; He could now quietly yield up His Spirit into the hands of the Father. He had drunk His Father's cup, had drained it to the dregs, and forth into His Father's heart he now uttered the triumphant cry of joy, "*It is finished!*" He had finished the work which the Father had given Him to do.

"*He hath done this,*" so ends the 22d Psalm ; and the Saviour now takes up this word of triumph, as He had before done the words of anguish in the same Psalm. In order that He might finish what was to be finished, *therefore* it was necessary that He should feel Himself forsaken by God. Now it was finished ; the righteousness was brought in, in which pardoned sinners, unforsaken for ever, stand before God ; all the good things of salvation were obtained, of which the needy shall eat and be satisfied (ver. 27). The Saviour looked around ; He looked back to the first sinner, forward to the last which shall be born ; and behold ! He saw not one whose guilt He had not atoned for and blotted out, for whom He had not obtained forgiveness and

peace. "By His one offering He hath *perfected* for ever them that are sanctified;" for He himself was made perfect—to wit, in entire obedience, even to the complete offering up of His human will, that He might be a faithful High Priest, able to be the author of our eternal salvation. In the parable (Luke xiv.) He says, "Come, for all things are ready!" This gracious invitation receives a new force, now that all is finished. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee,"—so the note of triumph begins in the 22d Psalm; and behold! His word, offered up to God: "*It is finished!*" is also all of it sweet Gospel for the whole world. "The Gospel which is now preached throughout the whole world upon the sufferings and death of Jesus, is an exposition upon His word, *It is finished.*" (Rieger.)

On this word of my Saviour I will lay the finger of my faith, and doubt not; on what *has been done* on the cross for me, I will lean and ground myself: thus have I attained unto the peace of the just. It is really finished, the work of my atonement; for Christ hung upon the cross to deliver and save even me, because I am a sinner. What do those do who toil in the multitude of their own ways, and occupy themselves with works which shall help out for them the work of Christ; who instead of believing on Him who *justifies* the ungodly, invent for themselves a Saviour who shall make the virtuous still somewhat more just, or the repentant sinner by degrees more clean—what do these do but put disdain upon their own share of the word: "*It is finished!*" Oh, let us sink down upon the immoveable foundation of the work of Jesus Christ for us! let us throw ourselves upon Him, believing that we are complete *in Him*, and that there is not so much as a hair of us which has not been purchased through His blood! then we give His cross the honour which is its due.

"*It is finished!*" In this word will I comfort myself; because I am forced to confess that all *my* finishing of the will of God is still but imperfect, piecemeal work, while yet the law

urges it upon me that not so much as one tittle of it must remain unaccomplished. "Christ is the end of the law,"—the law is finished ; what it requires, that Christ has performed,—Christ is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one who believes (Rom. x. 4).

"The law says : Thou hast sin. If I say Yes, I am lost. If I say No, I must have a sure ground to stand upon, that I may be able to refute the charge, and maintain the No. But how can I say No ? it is surely true ; Scripture also testifies that I am born in sin. From whence then can I take the No ? Certainly in my bosom I shall not find it ; but in Christ, there I must go to fetch it, and fling it to the law, and say, 'Behold One who can say *No* to all laws, who has also His ground for it, for He is pure and without sin.' And the *No* he gives to me likewise ; so that although I am constrained to say, when I look at myself, that I am a sinner, and cannot plead with thee, but am conscious that there is nothing in me, and see God's wrath, yet against that I can allege that His righteousness is mine, therefore I am no longer in sins. But the law continues nevertheless to knock, and say, Yes, but for all that thou must do good works and keep God's commands, if thou wouldst be saved. Answer : Dear law, cease thy disputing and go thy way, for I have nothing now to do with thee ; in the sight of this Judge before whom we are now disputing, it is not what I am and what I must or must not do, that avails aught ; but what *Christ* is, what *He* gives and does. I already have my righteousness and the main part of all salvation, without any works, in my Lord Christ, and I am saved already, before thou camest, so that I have no need at all of thee to save me. For where works are of no avail, there no law avails ; and where there is no law, there is also no sin ; therefore, there shall nothing have to do with it, but the bride alone in the 'King's chamber' (Ps. xlv.) with Christ, in union with whom she possesses everything, and needs nothing which is necessary for happiness ; and she may let the law out of doors go on drumming and piping,

and may boldly despise it and thrust it away, whenever it seeks to lay hold of her conscience." (Luther.) Allow me to give one passage more from a Lutheran witness before Luther's time, Bernhard ; he says, "My brother, see to it that ye obtain a heel wholly free from merit, that so the malicious enemy, when he comes, may find nothing on which to fasten his tooth and give ye a wound." This he said shortly before his death.

The Lord Jesus now prepared for death. With a loud voice He cried out, "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit !*" Even this His last word He takes from Scripture (Ps. xxxi. 5), thus dying *with* Scripture even as He died *according* to Scripture. The moment had come when He was ready to lay down His life. He came to death, the Fathers say, not death to Him. But He came also to a real and natural man's death. He let consciousness depart, and gave up His Spirit, no longer having power over it, into His Father's keeping. When in the face of martyrdom, Paul said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." As a deposit, as a precious pledge and jewel, did the Lord Jesus surrender His soul into the hands of God. Him, He now again, as in His first word from the cross, called *Father*, and on Him, in perfect faith, in the assurance of faith expressed in the 41st psalm, He relied, that He would keep that which He had committed to Him against the day when He should receive it back again at the resurrection of His body. Must he not be in what was His Father's (Luke ii. 49)? From the first to the last word which we have from Him in His state of humiliation, He declares unmistakeably whence He is and whither He is going. What Jesus meant by this word we know from the 16th psalm, which, according to the testimony of the Apostle Peter (Acts ii. 25, &c.), is fulfilled in Christ ; there we read, "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put My trust. Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell." The soul of Jesus, protected from every touch of suffering, and secure from Satan's rage, entered into God's rest ; the

Father's hand grasped her ; it covered her with its shadow (Isa. xlix. 2). We know whither He went : into Paradise, which He promised to the thief ; God's hands are the Paradise.

But not the soul of the thief alone did He draw after Him ; but likewise the souls of all His believers, did He, as High Priest and Mediator, deliver up to the Father together with and in His own soul. Therefore every poor sinner may venture to do as Paul did ; he may safely commit his soul to the Father of his Lord Jesus Christ ; for it is already "graven upon the palms of His hands,"—those hands of all-mightiness and grace. Yes, the Saviour has expressly told us so, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and my Father are one." It is "a fearful thing to *fall* into the hands of the living God," for none can deliver us out of them : it is a blessed thing to *commend ourselves* into the hands of the living God through Christ Jesus, for none can pluck us thence. Therefore did the blessed martyr Stephen, in the midst of the deadly stones, cry out with a loud voice, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit !" So likewise John Huss, when on his way to the stake—whilst they were mocking him with a paper crown, and giving over his soul to devils—repeated over and over again the words, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of Truth." And who can count the host of believers, who have died with this prayer after the fashion of their Redeemer, and have entered into Paradise ! Luther is amongst their number. Praised be the Lord, that He hath given us too the certainty of where our soul will be hid and right safely kept against the last day. How and what it will be between the hour of death and the hour of resurrection, we know not, nor desire to know ; the hand of the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ is a sufficient resting-place for us ; we shall be at home there, what more can we desire ?

"*When He had so said, He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.*" The Gospel narrative of the death of Jesus Christ is told in few words; the fruits of His death are proclaimed in the discourses and letters of the Apostles richly and copiously. The Evangelists, says an old Father of the Church, provide the silk; the Apostles weave the garment.

He bowed His head. This John beheld. It was as if He made a sign to death: Come now, lay hold on Me, now will I die! For Jesus Christ *gave* Himself up to death—"Thou sprang'st into the jaws of death." A man has no power over his spirit, to retain it or to let it go, in the day of death (Eccles. viii. 8); but the Lord of Glory, the Prince of Life, had power over His life; He could surrender it and lay it down; *take it from Him* could no man. As it was "not possible that He should be *holden* of death," so was it impossible that He should have been *seized* by death, unless of His own free impulse; *i. e.*, of His strong love, He had been willing to give up His life to be the ransom for the sin of the world. As before, in the garden, when they came to take Him, the soldiers fell to the ground, and did not seize and bind Him until He of His own free will presented Himself to them, so also would death and "he who had the power of death," have fled from before Him, if there had been in His heart the slightest movement of opposition. "Not against His will did the Saviour's Spirit leave His flesh, but because He would, and when He would, and how He would. Who is there that can even go to sleep when He will, as Jesus died when He would? Who thus puts off his clothes when he will, as Jesus unclothed Himself of His flesh when He would? Who goes thus out of his door when he will, as Jesus when He would, went out of this world?" (Augustine.)

But although the Lord willingly died, He was not on that account to escape from the *pains* of death. Rather he felt all the more really and keenly this piercing pain of the soul's parting asunder from the body; so that in Him believers pos-

sess a Lord who has sanctified even their death-agony, since He Himself has shared it. Yes, He also has suffered the bitter death-throes of sinful death-deserving humanity; and it was just when He felt death to be the wages of sin, that He uttered the complaint, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But now all is again bright and clear within His soul; He knows now *why* God had forsaken Him; in order, namely, that He might finish the work of atonement; He knows why He must die, and confident of His victory over death, He bows His head, and gives up the ghost.

He gave up the ghost—O marvellous and gracious death! Right into the heart of God did the feeling of the pains of death penetrate. God indeed is Life; Death touches Him not. But God was in Christ, was in the Christ dying on the cross, and was reconciling the world to Himself, in that He was wholly appropriating to Himself, in the humanity which He had taken, all that, according to the eternal claim of His justice, was due to mankind as the wages of its sin. For this purpose, says the Apostle, did He take part in our flesh and blood, that He might *die* for us, and through death accomplish His work of atonement (Heb. ii. 14). Thus then the whole matter of our salvation, on account of which the Saviour came into the world, received through His death its perfect accomplishment. Christ died, and through His own blood obtained eternal redemption. It was a moment of unparalleled preciousness in which He bowed His head and gave up the ghost; the hope of all the holy patriarchs and prophets had been fixed upon this moment, and all eternity shall extol it. What it was that took place in this moment of all grace the Father has imaged before our eyes, in the signs which followed the death of His Son like the tolling of a bell. For "behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

The Pierced Side.

CHAPTER XIX. 31-37.

Ver. 31-37. *"The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that Sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs : but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced."*

The Fulfiller of the Law the Pharisees had put to death : now they are zealous about the Law, which commanded that the body of a man who had been hanged should not remain all night upon the tree (Deut. xxi. 23) ; the great Passover Sabbath being at hand was an additional reason for their wishing to preserve the land from such a defilement. Therefore they besought Pilate that the legs of the three crucified ones might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and with clubs broke the legs of the two thieves. Even the pardoned thief suffered this agony ;—for what matters it that the body of pious men must suffer the same pains as

that of the ungodly, if only one is going into Paradise ! But the Lord Jesus was already dead when the soldiers came up to His cross, and they brake not His legs. The Evangelist John considers this fact as particularly to be observed ; *for these things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled* : “ *A bone of Him shall not be broken* ” (Exod. xii. 46 ; Numb. ix. 12). It is of the *Passover lamb* that Scripture says this. This lamb was to be eaten whole ; a number of them ate *one* lamb in union ; therefore it was not allowed to be mangled. That too has now taken place in Christ, “ the Passover Lamb, sacrificed for us.” As the sacrificed Passover John regarded Jesus hanging on the cross ; and the voice which had first called him rose up again within him : “ Behold the Lamb of God ! ”

“ Nothing was allowed to remain of the Passover lamb ; it was to be eaten up entirely, or what remained was to be burnt with fire ; neither was a bone of it allowed to be broken. This holds good likewise with respect to the Lord Christ. He who would be a true Christian, must not eat this and leave that : all that Christ has he must accept and believe, and not eat a piece here and a piece there, as enthusiasts and heretics do. Arius was satisfied with all except that he would not believe that Christ was eternal God. The Anabaptists are not pleased that children should be baptized ; they reject this first baptism, and seek for a better one, as they imagine. The sacramental heretics of the present day receive all that Christ says, and are of opinion that they are right excellent Christians : only this pleases them not, and they refuse to believe it, that Christ, when he extends the bread, says, Take, eat, this is My body ; and when He offers to them the cup, Drink ye all of this, for this is the New Testament in My blood ; this they do not relish ; not only do they leave it, but they break the legs, that is, they torture, crucify, and mangle our Lord Christ’s word, just as they please. This we find to be the case with all heretics, that they eat just what they fancy of this Passover

Lamb ; and the rest, which they do not fancy, they leave or break in pieces." (Luther.)

Most faithfully did God watch over the body of His Son, which was shortly to rise again ; it was to be no more abused or destroyed. And from this Christ's members derive great comfort (Ps. xxxiv. 20 ; Matt. x. 30).

But another word of Scripture yet were the soldiers to fulfil. One of them, in order to make himself thoroughly sure that Jesus was really dead, thrust a spear into His side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. This was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled : "*They shall look on Him whom they pierced*" (Zech. xii. 10). Thus even the soldier's spear was wielded by the Father's hand. Israel shall behold its King as one *pierced* ; the wound of the spear shall be visible to "all kindreds of the earth," and they shall wail and say, *It is we that pierced Him !* But as an imperishable ornament does the Lord bear this spear wound in His glorified body. Into it did Thomas thrust his hand. And when He shall come in His glory He will still wear the marks of His slaughter (Rev. i. 7 ; v. 6), and will not be ashamed of them. We shall see Him as He is : that He is King and Lord over all, and that He is the same Jesus who died on the cross, and who through the suffering of death is crowned with glory and honour (Heb. ii. 9). In order that this magnificent sight may then fill us with glorious and unspeakable joy, let us now, in faith, gaze through His opened side into His heart. Therefore was it, the old writers say, in order that we might look through into His Saviour's heart that He received this spear-wound. His bowels yearn with heartfelt pity ; not one drop of blood is left which He did not give out for us and shed for our life. "I pray Thee, O Christ, Thou sweetest King, for Thy wounds' sake which Thou hast suffered on the cross for my salvation, do Thou wound my sinful soul with the arrows of Thy gentleness ; pierce my heart with the spear of Thy love ; that my soul may say to Thee : I am sick with love." (Augustine.)

John confirms this account of Jesus's pierced side by a solemn and emphatic testimony, and says, *He that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.* What moves him to this earnest testimony? First, he desires to make his readers quite sure that the Son of God died. This death is indeed the centre of our faith and of our hope; the foundation of the whole gospel, the innermost part of the mystery of Christ, it is, as Luther calls it, "the kernel of the nut, the innermost meal of the wheat, and the marrow of the bones." Thus also Paul says, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you—by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you—for I have delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ *died* for our sins according to the Scriptures."

John had yet another reason for making thus emphatic his testimony to the death of Jesus. It was this: that men rose up who accounted as foolishness the dying of the Christ come in the flesh; they held it to be beneath the Son of God; thus their proud reason took offence at this foundation of our redemption. But the Lord of glory *did* die. There on the cross hangs His pallid corpse; blood and water flows from the wound in His side, as it usually does from the wounds of dead bodies. Jesus Christ, come in the flesh, and dying in this flesh as the atonement for our sins—this is what John proclaims as the sum and evidence of the pure gospel (1 John iv. 3, 10). Therefore to this let our faith stand firm. But faith's "true form" does not spring from the authentic assurance that Christ's death really took place. Thou mayest not doubt it and yet not believe it as John believed it, who invites thee to fellowship with his joy (1 John i. 3). See, he adds, *He knoweth* that he saith true, that ye might *believe*. What he saw with his eyes the Holy Ghost had sealed in his heart as divine truth and divine power unto salvation. If the same Spirit gives to us also this assurance of

heart, this heart experience of the death of Jesus Christ ; then we believe.

But something more still has John in mind, when he so earnestly gives his testimony to that which he saw, and which had produced in him this blessed assurance. The water and the blood flowing from the side of Jesus sets forth to his eyes a saving mystery. In remembrance of this that he saw on the cross, he writes, in his epistle, "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ ; not by water only, but by water and blood." He came with the water of baptism, with which He was sprinkled for His Saviour's work of fulfilling all righteousness ; but He also came with His shed blood, by which He finished His work and ratified and confirmed the New Testament (Heb. ix. 17) ; when that was accomplished, *water* and *blood* came forth out of His side. Through this water and blood the Saviour spoke of His finished work of atonement ; and He now still continues to speak of the same in the perpetual witness upon earth of His gospel, to which are attached the sacramental seals of water and blood, "There are three which bear witness upon earth ; the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one,"—together they testify to the perfected Saviour, and together they ratify to believers membership with Him. Thus the apostle recognised in this occurrence a figure of the two holy sacraments ; and from the Fathers we have this beautiful saying, "From Christ's spear-wound, as from the opened door of life, have flowed forth the holy sacraments of the Church." Augustine says, "As from the side of the sleeping Adam a rib is taken, out of which the woman is formed for him, to whom on awaking he says, 'This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh ;' so did Christ, the heavenly Adam, fall asleep on the cross, and from His side flowed forth water and blood, the Sacraments of the New Testament, through which is built up for Him His bride, the Church, of whom the apostle says, We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."

The Taking Down from the Cross, and the Laying in the Grave.

CHAPTER XIX. 38-42.

“THEY thought to make His grave with the wicked ; but with the rich was He after His death.” Thus prophesies the prophet Isaiah. And behold, Jesus is “buried according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. xv. 4). Those who would fain have broken His legs thought to give Him a wicked man’s burial ; they would have put Him underground with ignominy ; the place of a skull would have showed His bones. But something very different did Scripture long before declare. His rest should be honour. His burial, indeed, belongs still to His state of humiliation ; but even now the glory was gently commencing, in which He was shortly to break forth out of His grave. Whilst the soul of the Prince of Life was about her glorious work in Paradise, it was fitting that His body also should be kept with honour. Therefore “He was with the rich after His death.” St. Matthew expressly mentions Joseph being *rich* ; and all the Evangelists give a most particular and minute account of the Lord’s honourable burial. Twice was Jesus rich in the days of His poverty. Once, immediately after His miserable birth, when the wise men from the East offered Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh ; and now, after His ignominious death, when a rich man buries Him, and a distinguished man anoints Him with precious spices,—yes, a rich Joseph has taken the place of the poor Joseph, who stood by the manger, and costly linen must be the swathing bands in which is enwrapped His body, now ripe for glorifica-

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tion. A glimmering this of what we read in Psalm xlv. 8: "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad."

Ver. 38-40. "*And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came, therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.*"

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus both showed this honour to Jesus. Who would have thought it? Joseph, born in Samuel's native place, Arimathea, was a pious man, who, like Simeon and Anna, was waiting for the kingdom of God in the promised Messiah. And he had found the Messiah in Jesus, had become His disciple, and had also pointed others to Jesus (according to one view of the meaning of the text in St. Matthew xxvii. 57); but he was a secret disciple for fear of the Jews. When the Sanhedrim condemned Jesus to death, Joseph would not walk in the counsel of the ungodly (Ps. i. 1); and now, when they had crucified Him who was his hope and secret love, he was no longer able to conceal that he was a disciple of this crucified One: "He went in *boldly* to Pilate." Nicodemus joined him—he, too, was also a secret lover of Jesus, a night-disciple. But the discourse which the Lord had held with him concerning regeneration and the brazen serpent, the image of the Son of Man, had germinated in his heart a living seed; and afterwards, before now, this seed of truth had grown to a timid witness for Jesus (John vii. 51); but behold, as Nicodemus sees the Son of Man lifted up on the cross, it now shoots vigorously out, and brings forth the lovely fruit of faith.

But what was it that drew forth to the light the hidden faith of these two timid ones, that they should become heroes at a

time when those who, at other times were heroes, had lost heart and were afraid? What but crucified Love! Jesus had given Himself up, even to death, for them, had not been ashamed of the accursed malefactor's tree. So brightly over the cross did the words shine: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end"—and they had all along been ashamed of Him. Fear of the Jews had kept them back from avowing themselves the disciples of Jesus! But the Lord had borne with them, had not quenched the glimmering wick of their faith. Now their heart was broken. Such a Jesus as this Jesus is, is worthy of being confessed—and they went their way and confessed themselves to be of those who had lost their friend and relation, whom it became to give Him honourable burial.

Oh ye hearts who love Jesus without guile, but hitherto in shyness and timidity, look about and see whether the time now is not like that eventide, in which Joseph and Nicodemus woke up in faithfulness and love! The Church of Jesus Christ, which is His body, is still being betrayed and mocked, delivered to the Gentiles, and crucified. But the end is not yet come; we are only experiencing the first sorrows. It is not enough that you should just not consent to the counsel and deeds of unholy men. Confess openly and fearlessly your Lord Jesus in His poor members—only make the bold venture! The venture is for Him who, undaunted, ventured His soul—He is worthy of it! Many who were strong are now becoming weak; those who were armed and carried bows are turning back in the day of battle (Ps. lxxviii. 9); then God will fain be strong in your weakness, that He alone may have the glory. Only I pray you be no longer ashamed of Christ's crucified body! On the third day He arose again from Joseph's tomb; He was only sleeping. And so also will the incorruptible Church, His body, rise again, although it be ten thousand times tortured and crucified; not a bone of it shall be broken; her true form shall continue entire and indestructible in the little band of believers, which shall

never be wanting, having the word and Sacraments, and through the one faith, clinging together as members of one another, and of the Head of the Church, who is at the right hand of God. And how greatly shall we be delighted at every new revelation of the Church's glory, even to the latest, if only we be sharers in her short-lived shame (Is. lxvi. 10, 11). Yes, that shall befall us which, on Easter morning, befell these two confessors, Joseph and Nicodemus, when they heard, "He is risen!" The first fruits of this resurrection-joy we already have; the dear damsel, the Lord's bride, has heard the "Tabitha cumi!" and her spirit has returned, and she has immediately stood upright, and divested herself of the grave-clothes, and *lives*.

Luther says: "But this example concerns us all, that we should follow this Joseph and Nicodemus; and when Christ hangs upon the cross, that is, when the Gospel is persecuted, and poor Christians on account of it are tormented, that then we should step forward, and, in spite of the wrath of tyrants, glorify the Son of God and His word, and honour it with open confession: until that the dead Christ shall reveal Himself with His glorious resurrection, and then the fainted-hearted, weak, fearful Christians, shall also be comforted and again come forward with their confession. For this interchange is ever going on in the Church. Some are offended and fall back, and frequently the strongest become weak when tribulation arises. On the other hand, the weakest then distinguish themselves, and make their joyful confession to be heard; that so there never may be wanting those who know and confess Christ. If the strong cannot or will not do this by reason of their being offended, they then learn from experience how entirely nothing man is, if God's Spirit is withdrawn; and then, the very weakest must do it, for whom it would hardly seem possible. For God, like a rich householder, chooses to have all kinds of servants in His house, not the strong and able merely, but also the small and weak. And in order that the strong may not despise any, they are forced to learn in their own case their weakness; and in order that none may

judge another, the Spirit of God comes upon the weak, encouraging, comforting, strengthening them, and that to such a degree that every one is constrained to recognise and extol the Divine power at work in them. This is what the Passion of our Lord Christ is for ever effecting in His Church, that so His Christianity may never fall to the ground, but may abide and increase and extend."

Now let us accompany the pious women, as they follow Joseph and Nicodemus, and let us look on whilst they busy themselves with the body of their Lord.

On this very evening of the preparation *Joseph* set about the burial of the Lord. He hastened, because the dawn of the Sabbath would have prevented the burial; and besides they could not let the precious body hang any longer on the accursed tree. But herein the Divine council was at work that Christ's body should rest on the Sabbath, the day of rest, from all its works, and should rise again on the third day, as He had said. *He went in boldly, unto Pilate, and besought him that he might take away the body of Jesus.* Thus did the love of Christ constrain him, and silence every hesitation. He went into the judgment hall without any fear of defilement (chap. xviii. 28); for he desired that Passover lamb whose sacrifice alone cleanses from all sins. He came in before Pilate, who now would gladly have been left in peace concerning this crucified King of the Jews, and begged of him the body of Jesus. "It is a great thing that thou art begging, O Joseph; for thou art asking for the body which is the Godhead's own temple, the habitation of the living Word, and the instrument of God's miracles of grace. Thou art asking for a gift exceeding in costliness anything in heaven or on earth." (Gerhard.)

Pilate however knew nothing of this. Perhaps he was glad to get rid of the body of Jesus off his hands. Yet he wishes to be quite sure that Jesus is really dead; he had no desire ever to see Him again; therefore he calls for the centurion. Scripture says nothing as to whether the centurion, besides giving an

account of Jesus' death and of the way in which it had been certified, added anything further out of his own heart, in which Jesus still was *living*. Indeed Pilate was not worthy of it.

He *gave* Joseph the body of Jesus. Into the hands of the heathen the King of Israel had been delivered by His people; the heathen Pilate accordingly has the bestowal of His corpse; and now this corpse is given back into the hands of a Jewish counsellor and a Jewish scribe, to be buried according to the manner of the Jews (chap. xix. 40). In like manner, in the fulness of time, will the rejected Saviour whom they have pierced, be again given back to the entire supplicating people.—Joseph begged, and Pilate gave. “Justly may we here exclaim: Hear what the unjust judge does! And shall God refuse His Son, whom He gave up to death, to those who ask for Him at His hands?” (Rambach.)

And Joseph went and bought fine linen, and came, and took down the body of Jesus. He himself took Him down, with his own hands; yet out of that little company which was standing by the cross there were some who lent him their help, and surely of that number was John. *He* had washed His disciples' feet: how then could the disciples be ashamed of His wan and bloody limbs? But here we have also another lesson from the cross, respecting which Gerhard says: “So long as the sinner continues in his sins, he, as much as in him lies, is keeping Christ still extended on the cross; for our sins are the cause of His crucifixion; but when through repentance he turns to Christ, he then takes Him down from the cross, and embraces Him. And as one who embraces another, may do with him what he will, if only he finds no resistance, so in like manner can the sinner who has truly turned to Christ, and who embraces Him with the arms of faith and love, obtain from Him all that he desires, for Christ offers no resistance to the desire of the poor sinner.”

Now came also *Nicodemus, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.* As before Mary

had broken the box, and poured out its whole contents of precious ointment upon the Saviour whom she wholly loved, so Nicodemus brings an hundred pound weight of spices ; perhaps he expended on it all the money which he had to give. *Myrrh* and *aloes* are mentioned in Cant. iv. 14, as among the most precious spices which scent the garden of the daughter of Zion. Thus together they prepare the Lord's body for burial after the manner of the Jews ; they wash and anoint it, and make it neat ; they wrap it in fair linen and in sweet smelling cloths, and they bind the handkerchief round the head—the head which had worn the crown of thorns. See, "He was with the rich after His death ?" With those who were rich in *love*, whose hearts' spikenard gave back the delicious odour which they had sucked in from the near presence of the Beloved One (Cant. i. 12).

Ver. 41, 42. "*Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden ; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day ; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.*"

The grave in which they laid Jesus was situated in a *garden*, near to Golgotha. In a garden it was that sin and curse sprang up with Adam's transgression ; in a garden the sufferings of Christ's atonement first began ; in a garden, sin, death, and curse were buried together with Christ. It was Joseph's own grave. Thus it was in a *strange* grave that the Lord rested. "What need had He to have a grave of His own who was only to remain three days in the grave ? In another's grave is laid He who died for others' guilt," Gerhard says ; and he adds : "In the grave of the *pious* Joseph He is laid. He who died between malefactors on the cross, chose to rest in a just man's grave ; for having once died for sinners, He dies no more, but imparts life and righteousness to believers. Spiritually, however, Christ still dies in the hearts of sinners, and rests in the souls of the just."

It was a *new* grave, in which none had ever been laid. As after a new manner the Giver of the new birth chose to be born

of the Virgin, so also after a new manner did the Author of the new resurrection choose to be buried. He would be laid in a new grave, He who craves a new heart to dwell in." (Bernhard.)

In a *rock* the grave was hewn. It was to be so firm that only angelic power should be able to force it. Joseph and Nicodemus might, perhaps, have preferred carrying the Lord's body further away, to Bethany or to Galilee ; but as the Sabbath was about to dawn, they chose the new grave in the garden, which was close by. But it was God's hand that so ordered it, in order that Christ's resurrection might first be made known in Jerusalem. Before the door of the grave they, lastly, rolled a great stone ("When once Christ has made our heart His resting-place, let us close fast the door behind Him, that nothing else may intrude there"—Gerhard), and then they departed ; they thought only of guarding the Lord's body from the hands of ungodly men ; of the angel who should roll away the stone they had no conception. Even the pious women who were looking on upon His burial thought this to be the last honour that could be paid Him. But yet they also desired to do what they yet could to honour Him ; so they marked well the grave and returned, and prepared ointment and spices.

It is not in vain that we repeat in our creed that the Lord Christ was *buried*. His burial is an article of our holiest faith ; therefore both the Apostle Paul especially mentions it in reckoning up his apostolic testimony (1 Cor. xv. 4), and the Lord himself foretold it (Matt. xii. 40). But what does Christ's burial contain fundamental of our faith ? This we will now consider. The Lord might have had the power of *immediately* taking again the life, even of His body ; for death could not retain this body in his grasp one moment longer than the soul of Christ was willing that he should. But it was not His will to rise from the dead at the very moment of His death ; for "*in all things* it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren," that in all things He might be able to *help* them. Therefore He did not pass over even the grave. He has gone through

that dark passage, "the way of all flesh" (1 Kings ii. 2 ; comp. Acts ii. 39), before us, and has sanctified it for us. And His body, too, was suited to the grave, for it was the body of His humiliation, the body of weakness in the likeness of sinful flesh, a corpse. And as the old man was crucified with Him, so also in His buried body was the body of sin now entirely removed, and put out of the way. For out from His grave no more weakness came forth, no form of sinful flesh ; all form of humiliation and death was laid aside ; it was swallowed up in life, in the changed form of His glorified body.

He who hung on the accursed tree was taken down the same evening from the cross, as a sign that the curse was destroyed. Christians, when they fall asleep, take with them into the grave nothing that condemnation can lay hold of ; their graves have become Sabbath resting-places. "Just as Christ, through His baptism in the waters of the Jordan, sanctified all water for the washing of regeneration, so also through His burial in Joseph's grave, He sanctified all our graves, that they should be only sleeping chambers of the living. As Christ was born for us, and suffered and died for us, so in like manner was He also *buried for us* ; namely, for our salvation ; for He obtained for us a blessed rest in the grave. God rested from His work of creation on the seventh day, and hallowed the Sabbath-day ; so also was it Christ's will to rest from His finished work of atonement, and to keep his Sabbath in the grave, in order that our souls may rest peacefully in God, and our bodies in the grave, and that the entrance may stand open to us into rest eternal." (Gerhard.)

Still further. Christ was to show Himself upon earth to be Lord, even over the dead, like as he showed Himself to be their Lord and Redeemer beneath the earth. Through His being buried and coming forth again out of the grave, He has proved Himself to be the Prince of Life of all who are buried ; He has taken possession of the whole kingdom of death ; He has got into His hands the keys of hell and of death (Rev. i. 17, 18). The

Apostle Paul derives the power and right of Christ over the dead expressly from this cause, that He himself has died and risen again from the grave (Rom. xiv. 9). Therefore in Him the dead also have now their Head and rightful Lord, instead of him who before had the power of death, the Devil. During their sleep in the grave they may comfort themselves in the fellowship of their Lord Jesus Christ. When I consider that my Jesus was laid as a corpse in the grave, corpses and graves cease to possess for me any terror. Yes, our blessings rest upon the "holy grave," which sanctifies our graves! True, this judgment is impending over my flesh still—it will be laid in the grave, and will be a prey to corruption. But to that judgment, by virtue of my baptism, I have long since, and often, given over the old man; and I know that since then, in my emancipated spirit, I live according to God (1 Pet. iv. 6). Yes, I know that even my body bears within it the seed of indissoluble life; for my body cleaves to the body of my Lord Jesus Christ, whom I have also, in the Holy Supper, received into my mouth. He will change my vile body, and fashion it like unto His glorious body. "When thou dost wrap thyself in the death of thy Lord Jesus as in a shroud, and dost cover thyself with His resurrection, then is thy righteousness so great, that all thy sins are but as a little spark, and the righteousness is as a great sea; and thy death and ours become far less than a sleep and a dream. And, moreover, our shame that we are buried so filthily is covered with a glory, of which the name is JESUS CHRIST—therewith so adorned is it, that the very sun will hide his head for shame before it." (Luther.)

Mary Magdalene.

CHAPTER XX. 1-18.

THE Sabbath was over. As the Galilean women had been quietly keeping the Sabbath amongst themselves according to the commandment (Luke xxiii. 56) ; so also had the Lord, resting from all His works of redemption, been keeping His Sabbath in Joseph's grave.

It was still night upon the earth. The cold rocks stood out sharp and rigid, the garden was desolate, and awfully still. Hostile soldiers, an armed wall, were there to protect the cold, dead world from Him whom, even in death, it feared. It was night in the disciples' hearts. Their Love was crucified, their Glory dishonoured, their Hope destroyed, their life was waste and desolate. The seven stars of those words from the cross were fading fast away behind the stormy clouds of their soul. They wept and lamented (chap. xvi. 26). Scattered without hope, united again without hope, one thing alone occupied their thoughts, and sight, and words, and that was His grave. *God himself lay dead in this grave.*

The ungodly were preparing to gather in the harvest from their seed of blood. They had laid up store for many years ; their life of pleasure should now go on ; they thought to continue lords of the world. The Devil's spies roamed through the garden ; the longer it continued quiet there the less became their anxiety. They hoped soon to tread under foot, to their heart's desire, the now at last conquered world. For God lay *dead* in this grave.

But even now hell was destroyed, the devil's throne overturned, principalities and powers disarmed. The hopes of the ungodly were as idle dreams; a terrible waking was awaiting them; their harvest should be like their seed, blood and destruction. The angels were preparing with shouts of joy to descend upon the now reconciled earth; the road from heaven to Joseph's garden was filled with the hosts of the Lord; all heaven was bending towards this grave. For *God* lay dead in this grave.

At length Sunday dawned, the third day after the preparation, the day of the Lord's death and burial.

“Up, up! my heart, with joy embrace
That which to-day is taking place!
After the long and bitter night,
With joy at length bursts forth the light!”
To-day is Christ ris'n from the dead!

On *Sunday* He chose to rise, because on this day began the creation of the world with the calling into being of light: the light which is the life of the created world was to have *one* birthday (Comp. Acts xiii. 33) with the Life which is the Light of the restored world. Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection, is the *Lord's day* (Rev. i. 10); this day has been set apart by the Church gathered together through the preaching of the resurrection, as the day for their beauteous services of divine worship (Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2).

On the *third* day the Lord chose to rise; not on the first, for He would sanctify for us the passage through the grave; not on the second, for He would keep the Sabbath, and by resting in the grave confirm the reality of that death of His into which He passed when He bowed His head on the cross; not later than the third day, because He would no longer delay to prove Himself the Prince of Life, and to turn the sorrow of His disciples into joy. On the third day He rose again *according to the Scriptures*, as Paul says. The Lord Himself had

before repeatedly testified of His resurrection on the third day, and had pointed out the prophet Jonas as His type.

And just as the passage in Hosea, chap. xi. 1, "I have called My Son out of Egypt," is brought forward by the Evangelist Matthew as applicable to the Lord Christ, because, to wit, the Head and the members belong together; so may we also apply to the Head what the same prophet (chap. vi. 2), says concerning the torn and healed members: "After two days will He revive us, in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." In return the members now hope for that which first has happened to the Head; as Augustine says: "We too shall rise again on the third day. The day of our life is the preparation day, in which, with Christ, we labour, suffer, and die; to that preparation day follows the Sabbath, the day of rest in the grave; and that will at length be succeeded by the day of resurrection into eternal life."

The *computation* of the *three* days Luther clearly explains thus: "Christ with His death partially embraced all three days. For He died about two o'clock on Friday, so that on the first day He lay we may say two hours; the whole of the next day He lay, and that is the true Sabbath; on the third day—to-day as it were—He rose from the dead, and took the day by surprise."

Very early in the morning did the Lord choose to rise. When He cried out on the cross, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" the lustreless sun shadowed forth the darkness in which His soul was labouring; and now to-day, the morning sun which shines upon the grave of the Risen One is a reflection of the countenance which God again turns upon the reconciled world. "When Christ is born—so say the old writers—He is born over night, for He is hastening towards the darkness of death; but when He rises, He rises early in the morning, for henceforth He will see darkness no more." And—"those who love Him shall be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might" (Judges v. 31).

Ver. 1. "*The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.*"

Early, when it was yet dark, before six in the morning, did the Galilean women rise, in order to visit the Lord's grave. Some others, doubtless daughters of Jerusalem (Luke xxiii. 28), went with them (Luke xxiv. 1). Once they had ministered to the Lord of their substance (Luke viii. 3); now, moved by the same feeling of love, they desired worthily to minister to His corpse; for they had seen how hastily He was by necessity anointed on the evening of Good Friday. For this purpose they bring with them the spices which they had prepared on that same evening. When Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed the Lord with costly ointment, He promised a perpetual remembrance to her name and her love: so also was it the will of the Holy Ghost that the names likewise of these women should, through the Evangelists, be engraven in the remembrance of Christendom. Their names were, *Mary Magdalene*, the Mary of Magdala in Galilee, whom the Lord had cured of a sevenfold plague of devils (Mark xvi. 9); *Mary*, the mother of James and Joses, the wife of Alphæus (or Cleophas), and a sister of the Lord's mother; *Salome*, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, who was now learning to know the cup of which the Lord had formerly spoken to her (Matt. xx. 22); finally, *Joanna*, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward (Luke viii. 3), one of the "not many noble" who are called (1 Cor. i. 26).

True, the knowledge of these women was as yet very imperfect, and their faith almost expiring; they as yet only knew the Lord after the flesh; for all that they were desiring was the sweet though melancholy task of ministering to His dead body.—(It is worthy of remark, that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was not of the number of these women who went to the grave: we may venture to say, *she sought not the Living among the dead.*)—But the impression which these holy souls had received of this Fairest One of all the children of men, was still sufficiently

strong to make them forget every reluctance and every hindrance; the fervour of their love plainly shows that they even now turned towards Him the languishing eye of their faith; just as John from his prison sent to ask Him, "Art Thou He that should come?" And this last inquiring look of their expiring faith, which contained no reproach against Him, nothing but their whole love, the Lord beheld, and deemed them worthy to be the first to hear the news of His resurrection from angelic lips, and to receive the first salutation of peace from Himself, the Risen One!

"If these women had such love to Christ, whom they sought among the dead, with how much greater and heartier love should not *we* cling to Him, we who know that He is risen, and exalted to the right hand of the Heavenly Father? Then would the weakness which ever clings to all our works be also forgiven us too. For just as the ardent activity of these women's love was well-pleasing to God, although it was joined with much weakness; so also will our works be well-pleasing to Him, if they proceed from faith and love to Christ, even though they are stained with sin, for this for Christ's sake will be forgiven us." (John Gerhard.)

The Lord's resurrection itself, the moment of His awaking and going forth out of the grave, is not described by the Evangelists; for no eye saw how this took place. His cross was surrounded by thousands of beholders of His shame, many saw His sufferings, heard His sighs, observed how He bowed His head and gave up the ghost; John from the wound of the spear saw blood and water flow: but His resurrection was to have no beholders but the angels—He *was* already risen when the women came to the grave. Thus it was to be in part, because the eyes of sinful men, such as we still are, whilst in the flesh, are not fit to gaze into the workshop of God's glory; "the *ear* behoved to be called to the joy of Easter before the *eye*, the faithful harbinger of *faith* to be sent forth before *sight*," as Löhe says; but also on this account, because

the rising Christ is King of a kingdom which comes not with outward observation (Luke xvii. 20), whose glory is an inward glory, and whose visible form is the form of the cross. And not to all the people did the risen One appear (Acts x. 40, 41), but only to those in whose hearts He had already found a place as the crucified One; He not only came into the world, but also rose from the dead, not that He might judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved, therefore it was part of His meekness as the Saviour, that He chose not to shew Himself to the guilty city of Jerusalem with legions of attending angels in the splendour of His victorious life; for how would they have been able to abide His appearing!

Ver. 2. *"Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him."*

St. Mark lays particular emphasis on the fact that the Lord Jesus appeared *first to Mary Magdalene* after His resurrection (Mark xvi. 9); and when he adds, that it was that *Mary out of whom the Lord had cast seven devils* (Luke viii. 2), it is not merely in order to distinguish her from the other Marys, but also thereby to point out, what it was that attracted the Lord first of all to this particular Mary. As amongst the disciples the fallen Peter, so amongst the female disciples the Magdalene who had been rescued from the deepest misery—these two were the first to see Jesus after His resurrection, because it was they too who were hungering the most after the Saviour of sinners, or to speak more truly, because *He* was hungering most for the meat of their consolation.

Leaving the grave of Jesus Mary had hastened back into the city, in order to pour out her sorrow over the loss of the precious corpse to them who would most fully enter into and share her sorrow; and these were the disciples Peter and John—the disciple whom Jesus loved. Peter therefore had been readily received back again by his fellow-disciples, and especially by

John, the witness of his deep fall ; they were not ashamed of him, but wept with him who wept.

Ver. 3-5. "*Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together ; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying ; yet went he not in.*"

The last time that Peter and John went together was to the palace of the high priest ; now they go together to their Lord's grave. Formerly Peter had ever been in advance of the other disciples, when it was a question of showing love to Jesus ; to-day, however, he was behind John, who *outran Peter* ; for in Peter's questioning soul there was stirring the last look which the suffering Saviour had given him. John then came first to the grave ; yet he went not in—to him the grave was sacred. When stooping down he looked into the narrow vault hewn in the rock, and saw lying there the linen cloths in which the Lord's body had been wrapped, he started back, doubtless in trembling *joy* ; for the thought rushed upon him that it was other than human hands which had taken away the Lord's body, and from the grave of the *Risen One* he, as it were, heard the words : "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Ver. 6. "*Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie.*"

Peter now comes up, and hardly hears from John that the grave was empty, before he hastily—comp. chap. xxi. 7—enters, and now he not only sees the linen cloths, but, as John circumstantially describes,

Ver. 7. "*The napkin that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.*"

This betokened not plundering, but ministering hands. Could it be that Joseph of Arimathæa had prepared another grave for the Lord ? Yet no, for why should he have divested the body of the attire with which his own hands had decently arrayed it ?

Peter beholds all this in astonishment—he *wondered at that which was come to pass.*

Ver. 8. “*Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed.*”

What did he believe? Evidently, that the Lord had not been *taken away* out of the sepulchre, but that He had *gone forth* out of it, and that He was living in a state of immortality, where He had no longer need of clothes. “When Lazarus was summoned from the dead, he came forth, ‘bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin;’ for he was raised up from the dead to this mortal life, and was to die again: but Christ leaves the grave clothes behind in the grave, just as on the cross He had abandoned His garments to the soldiers; because He has risen to an immortal life, where there is need of neither food nor clothing.” (J. Gerhard.) With a feeling of shame St. John adds:

Ver. 9. “*For as yet they knew (understood) not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.*”

That it needed to be the grave clothes lying together and the folded up napkin which should first make them understand what the Lord with His own mouth had so distinctly before told them—this the disciple now confesses with shame at His weakness. Ah, if only the disciples could have understood that the Lord must *die*, and why He must: they would then soon have understood that He must *rise again*! Comp. Luke xviii. 34. But yet, in these last days, since the last Supper and the hours in Gethsemane, the disciples, and especially Peter even more than the others, had felt more clearly than they had ever before, their condition as poor sinners; and *therefore* it was that they now understood the language of the grave clothes and the napkin more readily than they had before understood the words of Scripture and of the Lord Jesus. John, before all the other disciples, attained to faith in the Risen One: what he had seen and heard beneath the cross had been as oil for his lamp of faith, which had not been quite extinguished even in the

darkness of the night, and which now on Easter morning revived again with a new lustre.

Where then were the blessed angels whilst the two disciples were in the grave examining the linen clothes and the napkin? Doubtless they were there, though not visible to the disciples' eyes. At present the disciples' angels were the very grave-clothes and the napkin. But to the poor Magdalene who, though she looked into the grave, did *not* believe, they did appear immediately in order to strengthen her.

Ver. 10. "*Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.*"

They returned back to their brethren. Peter doubtless also "*believed*," as John gives us to understand; but in his breast, more violently than in John's, there was raging a struggle still betwixt fear and hope, sorrow and joy, darkness and light. On his return home therefore he lingered behind John who was hastening back to his brethren. Then it was that the Lord appeared to him, He who knows how to speak a word in season to the weary (Luke xxiv. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 5). John, however, himself did not yet feel sufficient gladness to *announce* to his brethren what he was beginning to believe: it was not until afterwards, when Peter joined the eleven, that he joyfully exclaimed: "The Lord is risen indeed!"

Ver. 11. "*But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre.*"

She had followed the disciples; but on reaching the grave, she is overcome by her sorrow, and remains there alone to indulge her grief. When the disciples were gone, she draws near to the spot "where her Friend was laid," and still weeping, *she stooped down and looked into the grave*,—"she cannot resist, she must once more look into the grave, as if the very force of her longing must bring Him back there again." (Luthardt.)

Ver. 12. "*And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at*

the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."

Where such watchers were keeping watch, how could the body of the Lord have been *taken away*? Like the two cherubim at the two ends of the Mercy-seat (Ex. xxv. 18), these two angels are seated at the two ends of Christ's burying-place, with their faces turned towards this Mercy-seat, desiring to look into the glory arising from Christ's sufferings (1 Pet. i. 12).

Ver. 13. "*And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?*"—But Mary seeks Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One. And she is startled at the countenance of the angels, tearless, and shining with the light of joy; she would rather have expected to see them apparelled in *black* than in *white*; *her* Lord, she thinks, cannot be the Lord of these two men, else they would weep with her; she therefore says to them—"Because they have *taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.*"

"But, O Mary, if thou really believest that He is the *Lord* and *thy* Lord, how canst thou complain that men have taken Him away?" (J. Gerhard.)

Does not Mary Magdalene, who seeks her Lord and finds Him not, resemble the Sulamite, the bride in Canticles? "By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth; I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth. I sought Him, but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me, to whom I said: Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" (Cant. iii. 1-3.) This is at times the language of the Church, as well as of every individual soul; for there are times when every blissful feeling of her heavenly Bridegroom's presence is withdrawn from her, in order that she may *learn to trust without feeling, and to believe without seeing*, and that she may seek the Lord and His peace there only where He is most certainly to be found: not in "*her* bed," not in *her* thoughts and feelings, but in "*His* bed," around which "stand valiant men, holding swords, and expert in war" (ver. 7, 8),

namely, in His word and sacraments, through which He weds Himself with us.

It was necessary that the same sword should pierce through the soul of Mary Magdalene, which in the case of Mary, the mother of the Lord, was indispensable to her eternal peace; the same time of "*fasting*" which came for the disciples, "when the Bridegroom was taken away from them" (Luke v. 35), must also be undergone by her together with her *sorrow* (chap. xvi. 22). "Not to see and yet to believe!"—this was the schooling in which Mary was taught, as we shall presently see.

Ver. 14, 15. "*And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.*"

Even whilst Mary with a troubled voice was answering the angels: "*They have taken away my Lord,*" they perhaps arose and bowed themselves before *their* Lord: for Jesus was standing behind Mary. She then turned herself round, *and sees Jesus standing and knows not that it is Jesus.* True, the Lord brought out from the grave *the same* body which hung on the cross; and this same He afterwards carried also to the Right Hand of God: but far different is the appearance of the Lamb which is bearing the sin of the world and going to Its slaughter, to the Lamb which "is in the midst of the Throne" (Rev. vii. 17). Even in the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, when on account of the weak and earthly eyes of His disciples the Lord caused the majesty of His exalted humanity to shine gently forth with diminished lustre, even then He was not immediately recognised by them who had been accustomed to see Him in the form of sinful flesh (Rom. viii. 3). But there was something also in Mary's eyes which prevented her from knowing Him. "Her eyes were so full of water, and her heart covered by so thick a cloud of sorrow, that she could not recog-

nise Him whom she yet was so earnestly seeking. And believers are often as near to their Jesus as their soul is to their body; their tears and sighs, their love and longing, testify to the faith that is in their heart; and yet at times it is the will of God that their eyes should be holden, so that they cannot immediately perceive Him whom their soul loves and seeks, and abandon themselves to perfect repose in Him and His grace." (Scriver.)

Mary, when she sees Jesus, still goes on weeping; and He says to her: "*Woman, why weepest thou?*" The first word from the mouth of the risen Lord! Why must it be a *woman* to whom He first speaks? and why just *this* woman? In this woman the Church, the bride of the Bridegroom, is standing by His grave. In all reason she should restrain her tears; for she has the word of Jesus ("in three days I will rise again"); she sees the *empty* grave, the mighty operation of Jesus; and she is surrounded by holy watchers, whilst the enemies take to flight. But yet she weeps. Angels' consolation takes no hold upon her; her longing is for the Bridegroom; in love to Him she has brought her best, namely, sweet spices, imploring supplications, and heartfelt sighs. And behold, He comes to meet His bride, gives her the kiss of love, and the Church dries her tears, when Jesus calls to her: "Mary!"

Why weepest thou? This is what Christ's resurrection exclaims to every troubled sinner; for therefore is He risen, that our sorrow might be turned into joy.

Whom seekest thou?—thus asks He whom Mary seeks. He well knew that she was seeking her All in One, in *Him* in whom John and Andrew had formerly found what they sought (John i. 38). But because Mary with her tearful eyes was seeking not the Living, but the dead, she takes Him to be the author of her sorrow, for Joseph of Arimathea's gardener who had taken away the body of Jesus; and she says to Him, "*Sir, if THOU have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.*" What a true disciple's heart is Mary's! So entirely absorbed is she in this One, that

she says, "If thou hast borne *Him* hence"—as if there were none other in the world on whose account she could weep, and as if even the supposed gardener could be thinking of none else. To *take Him away* is what she wants, with her hands, on her shoulders! "What *Him*, Mary? thou dost not say whom thou meanest! Thinkest thou that in every heart dwells the memory of thy Beloved as He dwells in *thy* heart's shrine? And *take Him away*, wouldst thou? Thou wouldst bear Him on thy shoulders, thou weak woman?—Out of the fulness of her love Mary speaks; even what is beyond her power her love fancies but a light thing." (Bernhard.)

The supposed gardener Mary styles *Sir*, or, as it is in the Greek, *Lord*. "Him she calls *Lord* whose servant she was not, in order that through his help she might get to Him whose hand-maid she was. But God so ordered it, that she unwittingly called *Him* Lord who is the right Lord, and sought Christ with Christ. Yes, she was quite right in asking, *Hast thou borne Him hence?* For Christ Himself bore His body forth out of the grave through the power of His Godhead, and carries it up to the throne in heaven." (Augustine.) But now Mary shall know her Lord:

Ver. 16. "*Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself and saith unto Him, Rabboni: which is to say, Master.*"

He lovingly alters His first form of address, "*Woman!*" and calls to her as only *He* could call, "*Mary!*"—Mary! am I become so strange to thee that thou seest Me not, though I am so near to thee? Mary! why seekest thou thy Lord among the dead? Mary! why seekest thou among the dead Him who has rescued *thee* from death, and has made thee alive for ever? Through His *voice*, through His *word*, the Lord reveals Himself to Mary, who otherwise is not sensible of His appearance.

"When in tribulation and temptation we seek the Lord and find Him not,—when He appears to us in an unfamiliar form,—then let us take leave of our eyes and our feelings, and lay hold

upon the *word*, wherein, as in the clearest mirror, Christ's true countenance shines forth upon us." (Gerhard.)

Since that day when the Lord had healed her, and received her among His own, she had with blessed joy often heard her name from His holy lips. Oh, who but HE could it be, whose cry of *Mary* now struck upon her heart as if she had heard Him afresh saying, "*Mary!* thy sins are forgiven thee!"—who could it be but He, the Good Shepherd, who knows His sheep and is known of His,—who calleth His own sheep by name and they know His voice? (John x). With an exulting heart, trembling with delight, Mary perceives that it is Jesus, and sweetly overcome by her exceeding joy, she sinks down before Him, embraces His knees, and kisses His feet, and cries, "*Rabboni!*" (my Master).

And thou, my soul, knowest thou ought of Mary's joy, this joy of *finding again*? He has forgiven thee thy sins; He knows thee, and has called thee by thy name in thy baptism; thou art His. But thy unbelief has obscured thy sight of His grace; it has barred thy entrance to peace in His wounds. True, He is quite near to thee; He is asking thee why thou weepst and whom thou art seeking; but thou perceivest Him not, and understandest not the expostulation of His love. Then He calls thee again, and by thy name; He calls to thee in the preaching of His word, "Turn thee unto Me, for I have redeemed thee!" He says to thee in the absolution, "Be of good comfort, my daughter, thy sins *are* forgiven thee;" and in the Sacrament, "*This is My blood, which is shed for thee for the remission of sins.*" And behold, it *has been* to thee according to thy *faith*: thou hast found Him again. This finding again in faith, this touching of the Found One with the hands of adoring faith in praise and thanksgiving—this is far more precious than even Mary's finding again and touching of Him was; for her "*Rabboni!*" required to be exalted into adoration of the Ascended One.

Pause here, my soul, to contemplate the blessed hour of *that*

finding again which shall have no end. If then thou too shalt hear with thine ears thine own name spoken by thy Jesus visibly standing before thee—in a tone in which all His divine love is concentrated and echoes forth, in a tone so sweet that it fills thy heart with the perfect rapture of heaven; with a look from His eyes which forgives thee all thy sins, and heals all thy infirmities; amidst the joyful sympathy of angels, in the adoring and rejoicing presence of the blessed—and if thou shalt then venture to stand up, and spread out thine arms, and sink into His arms, and on His breast, in eternal union with Him—Oh, that that hour were already come! Lord, grant us to attain to it! Amen.

Ver. 17. "*Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.*"

Like the bride in the Song of Solomon, who when she had found again her Love, exclaimed, "I held Him, and would not let Him go!" (chap. iii. 4): so also did Mary. But how should she hold her Lord and not let Him go? As "Rabboni," as Him whom she knew after the flesh. She would fain bask again in the sunshine of His visible presence as she had done in Galilee. But another touching was in store for her, a touching which should really save; and to this the Lord leads her on. As if He had said, Yes, Mary, thy Friend *lives*, He whom thy soul loves. But with these thy mortal hands thou mayest not lay hold of the life which He has brought forth out of the grave. *Touch Me not!* That which thou wast longing to anoint with spices and ointment, that which in Me is like "the gardener"—to this, Mary, thou must not fasten thy love. I am not yet ascended to My Father. Wait till then; then touch Me with adoring hands, with extolling lips!

In the Lord Jesus Mary was wanting to touch a creature, something earthly; this He forbids to her, and calls upon her to soar above nature up into the Ascended One; for it was the

ascension which first fully *revealed* to His brethren the glory (*given* to Him through His resurrection, 1 Pet. i. 21) of the exalted Son of Man. Augustine says: "Stretch forth the hand of faith, and thou hast touched. For, *Touch Me not!* what does that mean? Thou only takest Me to be what I appear to be to thine eyes. But touch not *that*; for *in thine eyes* I am not yet ascended to My Father, although I am ever with My Father. Him who stood before her on earth she was not permitted to touch: then how was she to touch Him who was about to ascend to the Father? Yes, truly; it is thus that He would be touched; and thus He *is* touched by them who touch Him aright,—ascending to the Father, dwelling with the Father, like the Father." And Luther says: "He forbids her, and says, *Touch Me not!* as if He would say, I well know that thou lovest Me; but thou canst not yet touch and behold Me aright, as thou shalt see and touch Me. For as yet her rejoicing goes no higher and reaches no further than the carnal and fleshly joy of having her Lord alive again as she had had Him before; she clings only to that old story, and thinks to herself that He will again be with them as He was before, eating and drinking with them, preaching and working miracles; and she therefore desires to show her love to Him by her ministrings, and by touching His feet; as before when she had anointed Him, both in His life and in His death. Therefore He will now no longer allow Himself to be *thus* touched, in order that He may give her cause to keep still, and to listen, and to learn what as yet she does not know, namely, that it is not His purpose to be thus touched; but, He says, I will tell you something different and new: I am not risen from the dead in order that I may again in body and in time walk the earth, but in order that I may ascend up to the Father. Therefore it is no longer of any use to look at Me as at Lazarus, or others who are still living in this life; the thing is, to believe that I am going to the Father, where I shall rule and reign with Him for ever, and bring you also out of your death and out of every

sorrow. Then will ye have Me with you to be truly seen and touched by you: then will ye for ever enjoy an everlasting communion with Me and with My Father."

"*But go to My brethren, and say unto them: I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.*" But go! as opposed to her forbidden touching of Him. Not on what she now *sees* is she to lay hold, but on what she *hears* from the mouth of Jesus; namely, on the joyful news of His departure to the Father. As Luther explains it: "Thy touching of Me I have no care for; but what I do care for is, that thou shouldest consider aright My resurrection; namely, that thou shouldest believe that through it I have entered into another state of being."

And not only of herself is she to think, but she must impart the medicine of joy which has been given to her, to the sorrowing band of disciples. At the same time the Lord again comforts Mary, who was not permitted as *yet* to touch Him. Soon she shall venture to touch Him aright, she and all whom He calls His *brethren*. It is a glorious, a precious name, which is here given to believers,—*Brethren* of Jesus Christ. Oh, how must this *Brother's greeting* have comforted and refreshed the terrified and scattered disciples, when, moreover, they were so wholly unworthy of it, they who had forsaken and denied the Lord!

And to all of us poor sinners also belongs this tender name of brethren, and not to the first disciples alone; for the apostle tells us we are predestinated to be conformed to the likeness of the Son of God, "that He might be the first born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29); while, in Heb. ii. 12, this brotherhood of Him who sanctifies with them who are sanctified, is thus extolled: "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them *brethren*, saying: I will declare Thy name unto *My brethren*." The sufferings foretold in the 22d Psalm were now fulfilled in Christ; the glory now begins, of which the same Psalm prophecies from ver. 22 onwards; therefore He who is entering through suffering into His glory makes use of this very passage in the

Psalm, as furnishing the text for His first sermon: "*I will declare Thy name unto My brethren.*" *Friends* the Lord had hitherto called His disciples; now, after His resurrection, He calls them by a name of yet closer fellowship,—by the all-endearing name of *brethren*. An old Father of the Church says: "He calls them His brethren whom, in the Holy Supper, He has made partakers of His body; them brethren for whom He has obtained Sonship with God; them brethren whom He has appointed to be joint heirs with Himself; them brethren whom He loves like a brother." Luther is quite right in saying, that if we could truly believe that we are called Christ's dear brethren, we should then, even here, be happy; that the heart must ever be leaping for joy, and singing to God an eternal *Te Deum laudamus*. "For, take account what is the meaning and import of these words,—Go thy way, my dear sister, and tell my denying and faithless disciples, that they shall be called, and shall be *My dear brethren*. Does not that import, being in one word possessed with Christ of the entire estate and inheritance of heaven, and, in short, all that Christ has? They must be, indeed, rich and happy brethren and sisters, who can boast of having this Brother, who does not now hang on the cross, or lie in the grave among the dead, but is a mighty Lord over sin, death, hell, and the Devil."

"*I ascend unto My Father.*" See, the Lord does not send word to His disciples respecting His already accomplished *resurrection*, which of herself Mary would announce to them, but He goes still farther, and proclaims to them, with His resurrection, also His speedy *ascension*. And this, for the same reason that He says to Mary, "*Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father.*" The disciples were to turn their thoughts and mind towards those heavenly blessings which, through His resurrection, Christ has obtained, and which He dispenses in His kingdom; they were to see in their risen Lord the only begotten Son of the Father and his glory. His resurrection was to be followed by no fresh dying (as was, for example,

the case with Lazarus); the risen One ascends to heaven, and lives and reigns for ever.

In His farewell discourse, the Lord had repeatedly spoken of *His going to the Father*; but here He says, *to My Father and YOUR Father, to My God and YOUR God*. This is God's name which Christ desires to "proclaim to His brethren." His passion, and His rising again, has obtained this for us, that *His Father* has also become *our Father*, *His God* also *our God*. "But He does not say,—to *our Father*. It is, therefore, a different thing with the *My* from what it is with the *your*; *My Father* by nature, *yours* by grace. Neither does He say,—to *our God*. Here, too, therefore, the *My* is different from the *your*; *My God*, because under Him I, too, am man; *your God*, because I am Mediator between Him and you." (Augustine.)

We have already seen, in the Easter announcement of the angels, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the seal of our reconciliation. Thus, too, the first Easter discourse of the Lord himself brings into view this fruit of His resurrection, that we, poor sinners, may now venture, as Christ's brethren, to call God our Father with a *good conscience*, as St. Peter speaks (1 Pet. iii. 21). Not on His own personal account did Christ die, and not on His own personal account did He rise again. All that He has wrought is a common good and inheritance for us all; for we are bound together so closely with Him, that we could not be joined closer. "O blessed relationship, which we have with Christ, our all-wealthy Brother, who possesses heaven by a twofold right. He has possessed it from eternity, and He has obtained it in time; with the former He is satisfied for Himself, the latter He gives to His brethren." (Bernhard.) Let us, then, every time that we repeat the "*Our Father*," lay hold, in faith, upon our brotherhood with Christ; then shall we pray so as to be heard, *in the name of Jesus Christ*, as He has bidden us. "Let every one try and examine himself when he enters his closet and begins to pray, whether he is really considering what he says, and is well weighing the words, *Our Father*. My dear brother, what is it that

thou prayest? What is the language of thy heart? Dost thou take God really to be thy Father, and consider thyself as His dear child? O no, indeed, the heart answers, I know it not; how can I assume to myself so great an honour? Oh, I am a poor sinner, nature says; how could I exalt myself so high, and mount up to heaven, and boast that Christ is my Brother, and I am His? Well, how then are we to do? We must confess, and it is the truth, that we are poor sinners; but must we, on that account, make also our Lord a liar and a cheat, and deny and condemn this comforting discourse? God forbid! Therefore, although I indeed feel and know that I cannot, alas! with my whole heart, say, *Our Father*, for there is no man upon earth that can entirely say it (for then we should be already perfectly happy), yet will I begin and try, like a little child beginning to suck the breast. If I cannot believe it enough, yet I will not, therefore, let any give the lie to it, or say *No* to it; and although I cannot play the game as it deserves, yet will I try not to be driving at the contrary game (as despairing hearts do, who hold Christ, not as their Brother, but as an enemy and a gaoler), for that would be turning Him into the Devil; but I will be daily learning to spell it, until, either well or badly, as I can, I have learnt to repeat the *Our Father*, as well as this discourse of Christ's. God only grant that I may in some degree accomplish this, however I may stammer, or stutter, or lisp over it." (Luther.)

But the other fruit also of the Lord's resurrection, namely, *our* resurrection, is bound up in this comforting discourse of His. Since God calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob live before Him; for God is not a God of the dead, but of the living. So Christ teaches the resurrection of the dead (Matt. xxii. 31, 32). Here, however, He calls God *our* God. Even, then, as it was impossible that Christ should be holden of death, because God is *His* God, just so is it also impossible that *we* should be holden of death,

because God is *our* God,—a God, not of the dead, but of the living.

Ver. 18. "*Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her.*"

In the meantime, whilst Mary was hastening with her message to Jesus' "brethren," who were still weeping as she before had wept, the Risen One met the other women, who were returning from the sepulchre (see St. Matthew). In Galilee they should see Him, the angels had told them. But the blessed Lord sees well that the poor women are wavering betwixt hope and fear; that they are longing to believe the gospel of the resurrection which they were commissioned to deliver to the disciples, but that they cannot with joyful certainty appropriate it themselves—it was too rich a joy! Therefore they could not, either, embolden themselves to discharge their commission. Even as a sorrowing sinner, who is too shy to appropriate to himself the consolation of forgiveness, knows not, either, how to comfort his fellow-sinners. And this troubles the Lord; He can no longer restrain Himself; He goes to meet them, even before they have reached the city; and penetrates their hearts with the warm greeting of His own lips: "All hail!" (Rejoice ye!) And they instantly recognise Him, quicker than Mary did; they fall at His feet and embrace His knees. Jesus allows them to do it; them He does not forbid with a, "Touch Me not!" instead of that He says, "*Be not afraid!*" Through their touching Him they are to convince themselves, as afterwards the disciples should, that it was He Himself. And as by His greeting and bodily appearance, so also by His words, He confirms the preaching of the angels; "*Go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.*" To the angel's words the Lord adds nothing but the comforting name, "*My brethren.*" Mary did not hear wrong when she heard the Lord speak of *His brethren*; the disciples are to learn from the mouth of these women also, that Mary has reported the truth.

A sign is this fact, viz., that *women* are the first to hear the news of the resurrection, and to be called to proclaim the same. The Risen One gave honour first to the weaker vessel. And the history of the Church shows that this sign has been fulfilled. Oh, when the time comes that all the Christian mothers, who are appointed to be in a blessed sense "mothers of the living," shall be made manifest before our eyes: how shall we then at length extol the wonderful compassion of God, which causes Him to regard the lowly, and to glorify Himself in that which is weak!

Peace be unto You!

CHAPTER XX. 19-23.

"THE God of Peace has brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20). The saving Easter gift (Ps. lxxviii. 18), which the Crucified and Risen One bestows among His disciples is *peace*. How He has *appropriated* this Easter booty, this *peace* of *His*, to the disciples first, but yet not to them alone but to all who should believe on Him through their word: this is told us in the account which we are now about to consider.

Ver. 19, 20. "*Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*"

Late on the evening of the resurrection day, a few hours before midnight, the disciples were still assembled. They were sitting at table, and the subject of their conversation was Jesus. In the course of this day some of their number had seen the Lord; two had broken bread with Him at Emmaus. Why then had he not yet come into the midst of His disciples? He had sent word to them that He would go before them into Galilee; why was it that He, the Good Shepherd, did not, then, see fit to gather His sheep together in the place where they had been scattered abroad and affrighted? With these and such like

questions the poor disciples were tormenting themselves ; and do what they would, they could not succeed in soaring up into the joy of the resurrection. Even the fear which had seized upon them in the Mount of Olives, and which had driven them to flight, has still possession of their hearts : *with the doors shut* they were assembled,—a company scared, weak, dismayed ! What should He do, the dear Lord ? He could not wait until the promised manifestation in Galilee ; *on the evening of that very same day* must His earnest love bring them to the joy of Easter. Luther says, that the disciples there stolen away in that corner, and cowering in a heap, are the exact representatives of “ contrite, wretched, and needy souls, and of poor shy consciences, weighed down by sin ; to them the gospel comes imparting consolation, and to them the flavour of it is sweet.”

Even before the Risen One's greeting of peace fell upon the disciples' ears, their eyes beheld the Resurrection and the Life ; for Jesus *stood* in the midst of them, suddenly, whilst *the doors were shut*. Locks and bars had no power to keep out the glorified body of the resurrection ; just as the Lord had come forth out of the grave in spite of the sealed stone, so here He entered in spite of the closed doors. Like as at Emmaus He disappeared before the eyes of the disciples, so He here became visible before their eyes. It was ever the purpose of His love, during these forty days, to make it clear to His disciples that all weakness was now removed from off Him, and that from henceforth His flesh served, no longer as the veil, but as the mirror of His divine glory. Some, indeed, say, that the doors opened of themselves to give Him entrance ; but we will keep to the express words which John has twice deliberately used (ver. 26). “ Why should we seek for the cause of this miraculous entrance rather in the miserable creature than in the body of the creature's Creator ? ” (J. Gerhard.)

The Lord's appearance is interpreted by His words of greeting : “ *Peace be unto you !* ” for it was for this purpose that He showed Himself alive to His disciples, namely, that they might

have peace. The peace which He had given to them in the word of promise (ch. xiv. 27) He now extends to them in the reality of fulfilment ; as if He had said : That peace be now *with you* which, through My dying and rising again, I have obtained *for you* ! All the blessings contained in Christ's kingdom, namely, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, redemption from the power of death and the devil, the gift of eternal life—all this the Lord sums up in the word *peace*. In giving peace He gave all that sinners can ever need. He has made peace, the old writers say, *above us*, on high with the reconciled Father in heaven (Rom. v. 10) ; He has made peace *within us*, with our assured heart (1 John iii. 21) ; He has made peace *beneath us*, in hell, that we should have rest from Satan (Col. i. 13 ; Rom. xvi. 20). Thus, then, this greeting is not a mere form of speech without any power attending it ; it is a means of reaching forth, an instrument conveying the peace which it wishes. "God speaks not words, but things," Luther says. And when the servants of the Lord, acting under His commission, say : "*Peace be unto you* !" (Matt. x. 12, 13), and in the name of the *God of Peace* greet the Church of the Prince of Peace (Rom. xv. 33 ; 2 Cor. xiii. 11 ; Phil. iv. 9 ; 1 Thess. v. 33), they also are not speaking *empty* words, but words which are spirit and life ; because they are the words of Jesus, the ever-living One ; because He makes them His own, who infallibly has together and at the same moment, both word and deed. May the greeting of peace from the servants of the Crucified and Risen One be precious to us in the house of our pilgrimage !

The disciples were not able at once to appropriate to themselves their Lord's greeting of peace. They were *terrified* and *affrighted*, and supposed that they had seen a spirit (Luke, comp. Acts xii. 15) ; namely, the spirit of Jesus, for they had not yet been able to summon courage to believe in His resurrection from the dead. The body-requiring soul *is terrified* at spirit without body ; and the disciples would never have *rejoiced*, if they had

not become assured of a Christ in the body. Therefore the Lord comforts them with the proof of His *bodily* presence. As He shows the *glorification* of His risen body by His entrance among them while the doors were shut, so also does He convince us that it is *the same* body which hung on the cross and was laid in the grave that is glorified, by saying to the disciples: "*Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself! Handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and blood as ye see Me have.*" And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands, and His feet, and His sides. (See St. Luke.) And when they yet believed not *for joy* that it was really Jesus *Himself*, the same who before His death had been with them, and in His own body, the Lord in great condescension stooped to their weakness, and *ate before them* of the fish and honeycomb which in speechless amazement they presented to Him. Christ the Risen One eats, as the angel of the Lord once ate at Abraham's table (Gen. xviii. 8). "His eating was from power, not from necessity. In one way does the thirsty earth, in another the burning sunbeam, suck in the water." (Augustine.) In one way did Jairus' awakened daughter eat, in another the Lord of Glory, the Lord of all creation.— Oh, how His heart longed to chase away the unbelief of His disciples, and to make them happy in the blessed certainty that His words were indeed true. "*It is I myself!*" But Christ desires to give this happiness, not to the ten disciples alone, whose hands here handle the Resurrection and the Life; us too He longs to bless, while He so carefully qualifies them to be *witnesses of His resurrection*, as that afterwards they should appeal to this fact, as we find them doing, that they had "eaten and drunk with Him after He rose from the dead" (Acts x. 41).

It is of great importance that we are able to say with perfect confidence: The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was wounded on the cross, is *the same* body which rose again and which is exalted at the right hand of the majesty of God. For if the body of glorification were any other than the body of humiliation, then the wounds, from which flowed the blood of

atonement, would not be *eternal* intercessors for us; then the blood of Jesus Christ would no longer be a *precious* blood (1 Pet. i. 19), as being the blood of the *Son of God* (1 John i. 7; Acts xx. 28). But the Lord's greeting of *peace* was a mighty one; for—*when He had so said, He showed them His hands and His side*: see there! there this peace is flowing forth in full stream! The prints of the nails and the wound of the spear on the body of eternity guarantee our eternal peace! "This is the right sort of evidence to comfort terrified consciences and dismayed hearts." (Luther.) If the Lord's body in its state of exaltation were any other than the body of His humiliation, then also would the hope of the glorification of *our* worthless body be vain; our "flesh and bone" would then not *rise*, would not come forth incorruptible from the grave of its corruption. Jesus Christ not only *was*, but *He is*, the Crucified One; the angelic proclaimer of Easter news in the empty grave spoke not of what was past, but of what would last for ever when he called Him the Crucified One. "Ye seek Jesus that was crucified," in our English version should be rather "Ye see Jesus the crucified One," (Matt. xxviii. 5). For though indeed He is no longer on the cross, yet the marks of the cross still are on Him. "When the foundations of the earth shall shake, when the hills shall totter, when the heavens shall depart as a scroll, when the time draws nigh for His coming in the clouds of heaven, will not believers too be then filled with alarm? No, they dare not tremble nor be terrified; for on that day, His wounds, the marks of His humiliations, shall sparkle forth before the eyes of His believers, and of the whole world; to the comfort of His believers, assuring them that He has still the same loving heart, which once suffered for His sheep, so that they will be able joyfully to exclaim: I may not fear; for *there* is indeed my Saviour; *there* is indeed my Redeemer, my High Priest, my Lord and my God; *there* is my Good Shepherd, who for ever intends my good. But what will be the thoughts of them who have pierced Him, who are even now crucifying

Him with their sins? How will they tremble and be dismayed when they behold Him! For every eye shall see Him, they also who pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so. Amen." (Hofacker.)

Ver. 21. "*Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.*"

Christ required that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations; He here calls the *preachers*, and delivers over to them the holy office, in the discharge of which they are to relieve the blessed angels, the first Easter preachers. "What is all Christ's grace for us without the apostolic office? We should have no share in it without the messengers' voice. Therefore, as to the note of the trumpet, the trumpet itself is necessary, so to the peace which has been brought for us, the holy office is necessary, and together with the one the other also must be given. Hence, to the first Easter gift of divine peace belongs this second one of the apostolic office; and we must thank God for the one as for the other." (Löhe.)

The holy apostles are dead, but the office of the New Testament (2 Cor. iii.) has continued, and will continue, until, through the preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ, the last sinner shall have been added to the Church of them who are saved. That which *separates* the apostles from all their followers in the office of preaching, is possessed by the Church in the apostolic doctrine, the doctrine of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; the apostles, by virtue of their preaching, are the shepherds and teachers of the *whole* Church, even to the end of the world. The apostolic witness is the fountain from which every rivulet of true witness flows. But the one *office* of witnessing and preaching, the dispensing of the treasures of salvation which are contained in the name of Jesus Christ—this, in common with the apostles, is possessed by all who are called to the office of preaching in the Church. Not an *order* of preachers has Christ appointed, but

an *office* of preaching ; not to persons of a separated and enclosed circle, but to His whole Church, has He given the command to discharge those ministerial functions which make up the office ; namely, to preach the gospel and to administer the sacraments, and just by those means to dispense abroad the treasure, which is the treasure of all treasures—*forgiveness of sins*. For if we look at the context in St. Luke, we shall find that round Christ were assembled the ten apostles (Thomas was wanting) “and those that were with them,” besides the two disciples from Emmaus. There is nothing said to lead us to suppose that the Lord *excluded* the others, when He said, I send *you* ! If *that* sending is here meant which belongs *exclusively* to the apostles, we must then give up the idea altogether of finding here the institution by the Lord of the office of preaching. And although it were only the ten (as in Matt. xxviii. 18, 20, the eleven) to whom He gave the command of the office, it would yet remain beyond all doubt, that hereby the office is delivered to the whole Church. For who are they who in Matt. xxviii. 19, obtain commission to preach and baptize ? Is it not they with whom the Lord will be even to the end of the world ? And further, are we not right in teaching that *all* are to drink the cup of the Lord in obedience to His word : “*This do*,” because this was spoken to the first supper-guests (who *all* drank of the consecrated cup) not as *apostles*, but as *members of the Church*, as the *germ*, the *first-fruits* of the Church ? In the office given to the Church the Lord first, in the first instance, and by His own immediate act, placed those whom He *also* called apostles (Luke vi. 13) ; now He places in the same office, mediately and by the regular calling of the Church, those who are “fellow-elders” with the apostles (1 Pet. v. 1). When we thus say, that the *whole* Church is appointed to be the bearer of the sacred office, we do not mean, that every *single* member is without any further ceremony installed in office, and (we will say) may hand over his portion of office to others for the sake of seemliness and

order : he who would teach this, forgets that the Church is a body, a whole made up of members, of which all the members have not one and the same business. For example : to carry the food to the mouth is the business of the hand ; though, to be sure, it is possible for the same food to be fetched from the dish by means of the lips, and where the hand refuses her service, it is right from necessity so to eat. Now, the food is Jesus Christ, in the dish of the word and sacraments ; the hand of the office is to the Church's mouth, what the hand of the man is to the mouth of the body. Let us thank God for them whom He has given to be the reachers forth of His gifts and appointed to the ministry of the means of grace, and that He has added the *ministry* of reconciliation to the *word* of reconciliation (2 Cor. v. 18, 19) ! By means of faithful hands will He feed the hungry with the bread of life ; and where there is no ministerial hand outstretched, He will yet not allow His Church to suffer want, for it is not the hand which is all-important, but the bread.

But first, the Lord again says to the disciples : "*Peace be unto you!*" He has charged them with the office which preaches the word of reconciliation, and in this word they have to proclaim *peace* (Isa. lii. 7 ; Eph. ii. 17) ; above all things, therefore, they must *themselves* be children of peace, *ready* proclaimers of the Gospel of Peace (Eph. vi. 15). And in what especial need just at this time were the disciples of this purification from guilt ? They had already before been called to the apostolic office, but they had all forsaken the Lord in His passion. And now, that they are a second time called to the office, they first receive a call to peace—*Peace be unto you!*

Oh, blessed Lord, grant that I may first have Thy peace, whenever I have anew to invite sinners to repentance and forgiveness of sins !

"*As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.*" Christ is the Arch-Missionary and the Arch-Apostle (Heb. iii. 1), at once both the Author and the first Bearer of the office ; and the

apostles are His successors in the ministerial office. Christ came in His Father's name (John v. 43), and the apostles come in Christ's name. Christ was sent that He might speak, not of Himself, but what He had heard of the Father (John viii. 27; xiv. 10; xv. 15); and the servants of Christ are sent, not to preach dreams of human wisdom, but the word of God (Jer. xxiii. 16; 1 Pet. iv. 11). Christ was sent, not to destroy, but to save souls (Luke ix. 56; John iii. 17); and the servants of Christ are sent with power to build up, and not to destroy (2 Cor. xiii. 10). The Father worked with Christ, and left not the Son alone (John v. 17, 19; xvi. 32); and Christ works with His servants, so that their labour is not in vain. Finally, as Christ was sent, that through *suffering* He might enter into His glory; so also has He bequeathed His shame (Matt. x. 22), and His cross (John xxi. 18) to His servants, but after that His glory also (Luke xxii. 29; comp. 1 Pet. v. 1). Now, if we should all "honour the Son even as we honour the Father," for "he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him," so to the servants of Christ also the honour is due, that in them we honour the Lord who has sent them; as He himself says: "He that heareth you heareth Me; and He that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." Such reflections as these are calculated both to humble and to comfort truehearted ministers, and to be an antidote against both the pride and the despair of their heart; and they should pray to their Lord for obedient hearts, and anointed lips, and clean hands, that so they may honour the office whose honour they bear, and that their whole life may serve to display the lustre of the light-giving word: "*As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you!*" But let believers in general thank the Lord, that He himself speaks with them through the mouth of His servants, in which He vouchsafes to put His word (Jer. i. 9); and let them rejoice at the sweet *restraint* under which their hearing of the word is placed through the assurance, He who hears Christ's servants hears Christ.

Ver. 22, 23. "*And when He had SAID this*"—He DID it, He sent them, as the Father had sent Him, for—" *He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*"

Christ, the anointed One, speaks through Isaiah thus (lxi. 1): "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me. He hath sent Me to preach good tidings unto the meek." (Comp. Isa. xi. 2). Of this Spirit, with which he was anointed *without measure* (John iii. 34), Christ, as the risen and glorified One (John vii. 39), now gives by measure to His disciples, and thereby sanctifies them to the ministry of the Gospel, which is a ministration of the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 8). He sends them, as He himself was sent, by virtue of the Spirit's anointing, to preach good tidings to the meek, etc. Therefore it is to be the Holy Ghost, one of the Three Witnesses upon earth (1 John v. 8), who, through the mouth of the messengers of peace, is to carry throughout the world Jesus Christ's greeting of peace; the Holy Ghost is to be the breath through which the trumpet, the ministry of the word, gives forth a clear, distinct, powerful sound; the finger through whose touch this harp of God, the sacred ministry, gives forth a sweet sound in the ear of God and of men. "For the performance of these holy, Divine functions, the remission and retaining of sins, the imparting and the withholding of peace, the Holy Ghost is given to the apostles, and therefore their word in these matters is a word of the Holy Ghost, full of power and truth. His word of peace was not merely to light upon the world as an image to the ear of an absent matter, but as a word, filled with that of which it speaks, as a power of God, subduing and saving the world." (Löhe.)

The Lord breathed *on them*, and said, "*Receive ye the Holy Ghost!*" Not even this heavenly gift does He impart to them without an earthly means; this invisible blessing, likewise, has its visible sign. The breath of Jesus' mouth here has the same

meaning as the tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost (comp. Isa. xi. 4 ; 2 Thess. ii. 8 ; also John iii. 6). "If thou hadst no body, God would give thee His gifts in an unbodily manner ; but because thy soul dwells in the body, He extends to thee that which is beyond the senses, in a manner which the senses can perceive." (Chrysostom.) This is God's way of dealing with us, both spiritually and bodily in one. It is the Spirit of the Lord *Jesus*, the glorified Son of Man, whose breath is breathed upon the disciples ; that is, the Holy Ghost ; and where the Spirit of Jesus acts, there all sins must be forgiven. Hitherto, while Jesus "was yet with them," the Holy Ghost had breathed on them from the Lord's words ; had shone upon them with the light ; had moistened them with the dew of heaven. Now, however, after that Christ is made a quickening Spirit (1 Cor. xv. 45), they are to *receive* It ; the Holy Ghost is to take up His abode *within them*, and stream forth *from them*, dispensing light and life. And they gave themselves up to it for a temple ; and the Holy Ghost held His consecration festival on the Feast of Pentecost, when those here breathed upon by Jesus were endued with power from on high, and were gloriously installed in the ministry, for which they now received the Holy Ghost. "Just as in the first creation, God created man by breathing His breath upon him, through which He implanted in His soul divine light, wisdom, righteousness, &c., so that man became the image of God : so, in like manner, when Christ would renew the image of God in man, through the ministry of the word, He also makes use of this *blowing upon them of His breath* ; by means of breathing upon the apostles, He gives them the Holy Ghost." (J. Gerhard.)

To carry the Easter peace of the Lord Jesus to all nations—this is the end for which the holy, apostolic ministry was established ; and like a tree of blessing, this ministry, in the bishops (elders, shepherds) of the Church, spreads its branches over all the world, that the whole of Christendom may dwell under its shadow. The Lord was giving the assurance that now

the promised time was come, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations. And behold, *they are the ones*, the disciples and witnesses, the Spirit-filled messengers of the Risen One, through whom He purposes to preach this news. Christ's messengers find men mere sinners; and simple remission of sins is the treasure of their ministry. Therefore the Lord sums up their whole evangelical message, all that they have to speak and to do in His name, in the word: "*Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them*;" thereby, in actual fulfilment, delivering to them the power, which He had before promised to them in the person of Peter, and to His whole Church in common (Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18). "Three-fold is the commission of the power of the keys. That it is a necessary part of the Church's foundation, the Lord shows in those words to Peter, who here stands as the root of the confessing body of Christians; that it of necessity passes over to the whole body of Christians, and how they are to use it, is taught us in the other passage; that it bears within itself the heavenly power of the resurrection and is to remain even to the end of time, this is pointed out by the third passage now before us." (Rudelbach). Now therefore, after the victory of His resurrection, He gives the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which He Himself holds in His hand (Rev. iii. 7), to His servants upon earth; in order that God may never cease to be glorified as *the* God "who has given such power unto men" (Matt. ix. 8).

Mighty through God are the weapons of the warfare to which Christ calls His servants (2 Cor. x. 4); watered with the Spirit of the Lord, the Church speaks the Lord's words when she binds and looses; as for example, St. Paul, when though absent in body he uses the power of the keys, expressly declares that he is present in the Spirit in the midst of the assembly of the faithful, and with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. v. 3, 4). A man *speaks* it: "I forgive," and because he thus speaks in Christ's name and by Christ's commission, therefore

God *does* it. The word of absolution placed in human mouth, is God's word proclaiming peace to me, and "is the very gospel."

"Who can fully declare what an unspeakable, mighty, and blessed comfort it is, that one man can to another, with a word, open heaven and close up hell? For in this kingdom of grace, which Christ through His resurrection has established, we do nothing less than open our mouth and say, *I forgive thee thy sins*, not of myself, or of my own power, but instead, and in the name, of Jesus Christ. For He does not say, Ye shall of your own selves forgive sin, but, *I send you, as My Father hath sent Me*. I Myself have not done it of my own choice or judgment, but was sent by the Father for that purpose: the same commission I give also to you, even to the end of the world, that ye and all the world may know that this forgiveness of sins proceeds not from human power or might, but from His commission who sends you. This is not said to them alone who are preachers or ministers of the Church, but also to all Christians: in the extremity of death or at other needful times, each one may comfort and pronounce absolution over the other. Now when thou hearest from me such a word as this: *Thy sins are forgiven thee!* thou hearest that God desires to be gracious to thee, to deliver thee from sin and death, to justify and save thee. Yes, thou sayest, *thou* indeed hast pronounced absolution over me; but who knows whether it is true before God that my sins are forgiven me? Answer: If as a man I had said and done it, thou mightest with good reason say: I know not whether thy absolution has any power, or avails aught; but that thou mayest have no doubt in this matter, thou must be instructed out of God's word, until thou art able to say, It is not the preacher nor any other man who has absolved me; neither is it at the parson's bidding that I believe this; but through him God has said it and done it: of this I am certain; for my Lord Christ has given this commission and said, *As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you*. There He makes

them to whom He gives this commission in all ways on a par with Himself respecting the sending ; so that they being sent by Him are to do and perform just that for which He was sent by the Father—namely, to remit and to retain sin. There it bides fast, and that it is that does it ; otherwise, without this commission, absolution were nothing.” (Luther.)

The Church has appointed *private* absolution, not as if thereby any other forgiveness were imparted than through preaching, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, but that thereby the comforting voice of the gospel concerning the forgiveness of sins may pierce through the ear into the heart of every troubled sinner : “*Thou, thou art meant ; thy sins are forgiven thee !*” But this precious pearl of absolution must not be cast before swine ; this holy thing must not be given to dogs. And therefore the Lord, who is *holy love*, has drawn a bulwark and a holy landmark around the absolution of His ministry, by joining with the key of *loosing* the key of *binding* ; this He does in the words, “*And whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*” Where there is no power to retain sins, there is no power either to remit sins. Wherever the name of God is profaned, and to bold, impenitent sinners is pronounced forgiveness, there the Holy Ghost is grieved ; and the pious, who amongst scoffers and ungodly men, where all restraint is set at nought, yet long to find the Lord’s greeting of peace, must look to feel the sting of that word : “*Notwithstanding. I have a few things against thee*” (Rev. ii. 20). And even from the hardened, impenitent sinners themselves a kindness is withdrawn, when they are robbed of the *grace of excommunication* which belongs to them. For that their sins are retained to them, even this, during the time of grace, is the way and the ordinance of divine mercy ; and not only in the remission of sins, but also in the retention of sins, the servants of Christ exercise the power which has been given them “*for edification and not for destruction*” (2 Cor. xiii. 10) ; in binding as in loosing they show themselves to be *so* sent by Christ, as He was sent by the Father ; and He was sent, not

that He should condemn the world, but that the world through Him should be saved (John iii. 17). Comp. 1 Cor. v. 4, 5.

“Christ’s binding has for its object the delivering of the sinner from His sins ; His sole desire thereby is that the sinner’s conscience should be freed and relieved from sins ; for, therefore, he punishes and binds the sinner in order to make him forsake, and mortify, and avoid sin ; so that this binding may fitly be called a *deliverance of the conscience* and help from *sin*.” (Luther.)

Oh, how highly does the Lord exalt His servants, when He thus appoints them to be stewards of God’s mysteries and dispensers of the power of His kingdom ! May He give unto us the steward’s faithfulness which is required of us ! With fear and trembling do the holy words of remission and retention of sin require to be taken upon the lips ; and truly to every servant of Christ who first goes into the sanctuary to humble himself before God’s majesty and to ask : Lord wilt thou acknowledge me as Thy servant ? to every such minister the power of the word : “Receive the Holy Ghost !” will present itself for his joy and strong assurance, so that he can dismiss every fear in reference to “man’s judgment” (1 Cor. iv. 3). But woe to that servant who lays violent hands on what is the Lord’s own, and who, unmindful of the near approach of Him who is about to come, “begins to beat the men-servants and maidens” (Luke xii. 45). Let us at all times perform our office of loosing and binding in the light of *Easter*, before the eyes of our King, who is ready to come in to see the marriage guests, and to treat them according to the way in which they have dealt with the gifts and graces of His kingdom.

✱

Thomas.

CHAPTER XX. 24-29.

"THE bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." This precious promise the Lord had richly fulfilled in the case of His disciples, whilst He "was yet with them" as their Master and Head; they had had rich experience that such a Saviour was theirs, one such as poor, frail children of men require. But He will fain assure them, and us too,—and us too,—that in Him we still at the present hour have such a High Priest as *became* us (Heb. vii. 26) if we were ever to have one at all; namely One who is the Architype of all goodness, patience, long-suffering, gentleness, kindness, mildness, condescension. He will fain prove to us that this His Saviour's attribute of gentleness, leading Him not to break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax, still belongs to Him in His state of exaltation. Therefore every proof by which He showed Himself alive after His Passion (Acts i. 3) is encircled by the fragrance of this long-suffering and loving patience; but most of all is this the case with that one which was vouchsafed to Thomas. May the consideration of it be blessed to us! "As St. Paul, in 1 Tim. i. 16, speaking of Himself, says that he obtained mercy, in order that in him first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting; so likewise may we here say of Thomas, that this long-suffering was shown to Him, in order that in him Jesus Christ might draw forth all kindness and gentleness, for a pattern to all weak and simple souls." (Luther.)

Ver. 24. "*But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*"

The scattered sheep of the flock of disciples had, after their Shepherd's death, soon found their way to each other again. With the exception of Thomas only; *he was not with them when Jesus came.* Why was he not with them? It perfectly suits the state of his mind, those doubts of his which no fellow-disciple could overcome, that he should avoid the assembly of his brethren, and remain quietly by himself, alone with his gnawing sorrow. Thomas' mind was a reflecting one, striving after clear conviction in his understanding. When the Lord was speaking of His going to the Father, and of the way by which His disciples should follow Him, then amongst all the disciples it was Thomas who could not endure this discourse which was unintelligible to them all, and who gave the almost impatient answer, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" The same impatience may also be traced in his exclamation in chap. xi. 16: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." For it is not the courage of self-sacrificing love which here shines forth in Thomas's words (as was the case with Peter); rather was it a kind of despair of the establishment of that kingdom as King of which he had welcomed the Lord Christ. There is now no other comfort left for us, he means to say, but to die with Him, with whom we had hoped to live for ever. "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel"—this grief was gnawing at Thomas' heart likewise, now that he had seen the Lord treading His path of crucifixion; and deeper than the other disciples was he lying in unbelief; and with the greatest danger to his soul had he been "offended in Jesus," because to him of all it was the most difficult to bring all reason in captivity to the obedience of the "foolish" cross, and to overcome that hard paradox: Jesus, the promised Son of David, the King of the Jews and their only Hope, the Son of God—crucified and buried! He was therefore not with the disciples when Jesus came to them on the evening of the resurrection-day. He had

shut himself up alone with his huge sorrow, and kept away everything which could disturb him in the indulgence of his grief. Oh, how hard may not the enemy of life have pressed on this child of melancholy and sadness! Jesus Christ he was not able to destroy; he was forced to witness the resurrection of his Conqueror: but now he makes it his hellish business to hinder men from believing in the Risen One, and in his first wrath he aimed his most fiery darts against Thomas. But the Lord suffers us not to be tempted above that we are able. The Good Shepherd sought out even this straying sheep of His flock; He turned His hand upon the *little ones*, even upon this the very least of His little ones (Zech. xiii. 7).

Ver. 25. "*The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hands into His side, I will not believe.*"

The Lord first stretches out His hand to him in the love of his brethren; for their love took it for granted that Thomas had shut himself up, not from fear of the Jews alone, but also from a feeling of shyness towards *them*. They sought him out; they cannot leave him alone; he too is one "of their company" (Luke xxiv. 22). Peter, who had denied the Lord, and who of all the disciples had been the first to see Him as the drier of his "bitter" tears—yes, Peter, we may be sure, interested himself in the poor unhappy Thomas with most especial painstaking, in order to make him partaker of his own Easter joy.

But Thomas was inaccessible to the joyful intelligence of his brethren: "*We have seen the Lord!*" He believed not. How must the disciples have grieved at this! From it they might now gather how much their own unbelief had troubled *the Lord*; here was an opportunity for them to exercise themselves in the same patience which had been shown towards themselves. Had they not also supposed, when the Lord entered in amongst them, that

it was a Spirit which they saw? And that is just what Thomas now supposes. They might perhaps have seen a spirit, a ghost,—but not the Lord Jesus bodily. “God brings before him all the saints; plainly declares to him through the ten holy Apostles, We have seen the Lord; but he takes them for credulous fools, and says, Even if there were ten more of you, and all told me so, I would not trust you; but I will tell you what ten I will believe—I will give credence to these ten fingers of mine, if perchance they shall find it substantial.” (Herberger.) Bitterly deceived, as he imagined, in the hope of his life, he will keep clear now of any further deception. If it were true—yes, if Jesus really were no longer dead, but were alive again; if His ill-treated body were really invested with incorruptible glory; if He really were now *coming again* from His victory over death and hell, to receive His disciples unto Himself (John xiv. 3)—ay, *if, if* it were so, Thomas would then be a happy man; his doubts then would be removed; all would then be clear to him. But it is too great, it is *impossible*, reason says, impossible? No, faith says, who is seeking to gain an entrance within him; with God it is not impossible; and his oppressed heart sighs with increasing longing for the truth of this announcement of Christ’s resurrection, his own dear Lord.

I will not believe it—he says; and yet, what would he not give to see it? And it is in this that his unbelief differs from the unbelief of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees and Sadducees (self-righteous men and worldly men) will not believe what they tremble to see; Thomas will not believe that which when he does see, he eagerly and lovingly embraces. The ungodly man’s unbelief springs from the enmity of his heart against the object of belief; the pious man’s doubt springs from the opposition of his reason to the acting of belief. The former has his difficulty in *the object* which he is called upon to believe; the latter in the *not-seeing*, in spite of which however he is bound to believe what he loves. But

whilst we separate the doubting disciple from the number of the enemies of Jesus and rank him amongst the pious, yet let us not seek to deny or palliate his *sin*. By his obstinate doubting, by his wilful prescribing of the way by which only he would be cured, he not only wronged and despised the disciples, who first to him brought their apostolic message, but also Him who has ordained that faith should come by preaching, and not by seeing and feeling.

He stands out amongst the disciples as a forerunner of all those who cannot attain to peace, because they do not choose to comply with the way in which peace is imparted; they are rather befooled by the pride of their reason to seek for the assurance of their salvation in ways wherein God must to wit deal with them in a peculiar and especial manner; as if forsooth His love were too exacting and His wisdom had erred, in appointing for all sinners but one way to peace, the way of faith. Therefore it is with justice that the old writers, in painting the sin of Thomas, give it a very deep hue. John Gerhard places it by the side of David's adultery and Peter's denial, as "a heavy and a damnable sin." And of old, Chrysostom, Augustine, and other fathers of the Church extol the Holy Ghost, who has seen fit to preserve in everlasting remembrance this sin of Thomas amongst the sins of other saints, in order that this saint too, whom "the devil did not allow to enter heaven with unsoiled feet," might put to shame all boasting save that in the alone merit of our Lord Jesus Christ; and in order too that all Thomas-like souls might not sink in despair in the misery of their doubt, since they see the tender hand of the Saviour's love stretched out to Thomas, and hear his adoring confession: "*My Lord and my God!*"

"We flee to thee, Lord Jesus"—so prays St. Bernhard—"because Thou didst not despise the penitent thief, nor the weeping woman that was a sinner, nor the woman of Canaan who wrestled with Thee, nor the publican at the receipt of custom, nor the disciple who doubted Thy glory."

In his exposition of the Gospel for St. Thomas's day, Luther says: "Now it might strike some one with surprise, first, that the apostles should thus have recorded their own sin and shame, and next, that the Church should have so ordered it, that these very narratives should be read and considered on the days of the apostles, since they reflect such little honour upon them. It is, for example, but small honour to the Apostle Thomas, that he was so hard and obstinate in unbelief. And so on St. James' day, when we read how that he and his brother were desirous of having the highest place; and on St. Bartholomew's day, how that the disciples had a contention amongst each other, and that each wanted to be the first; and again, how that Matthew had been a publican and an open sinner; one might fancy that all this had better have been repressed instead of recorded and preached upon. But there is quite another meaning to it. For it is not our concern (as it is with the Papists) that we should highly honour and extol the saints; for from that we should derive but little advantage or comfort; but that we should learn from them how gracious and long-suffering God is, and how He bears patiently with sinners; and we should see from these examples, that in what we are by nature there exists but small difference between us and the blessed apostles; seeing that they, as well as we, were sinners and often went astray, and that they rested alone on Christ's goodness and mercy. And for this end; that we, although we may be conscious of the like or even greater weakness and sin in ourselves, may not therefore lose heart or despair, but from their example may comfort and encourage ourselves in the hope, that Christ will patiently bear with us too, and not chastise us for all that He sees amiss in us, but will overlook it, and help us to come out of our sins and to become more holy. For this reason it is that the blessed Thomas is to-day proclaimed aloud in every pulpit, how he stands stuck fast in fearful unbelief and no one able to help him out of it."

Luther well knows how to describe Thomas's heart; for he

himself had experienced the conflict of doubt. The pious pastor Antonius Musa once complained to him, that in many an hour of grief he was not able himself to believe the consolation which he preached to others. Upon which Luther answered: "Thanks and praise be to God that others suffer in the same way! I thought that in this I was all alone."

Eight days after Easter, again on a Sunday, the disciples were again assembled in the same place where they had seen the Lord. This time too the doors were shut;—why? this time, doubtless, not so much "from fear of the Jews," as from a loving anxiety on Thomas's account, as we shall presently see; for Thomas too was spending this Sunday with them. They had persuaded him to come. If he had not been restless and unhappy in his doubting, and had not longed to be delivered from it, he would never have returned to the company of believers. But then too he would have waited in vain for a visit from the Lord Jesus. Perhaps he was confirmed in his doubting by this very thing, that His dear Master, whom he knew as the most gracious of all the children of men, had not chosen, if He really had risen, to appear to *him*, him the most wretched of all the disciples. But well for him that he did not persist in this comfortless path of his own thoughts, which would but have led him further and further from light and truth! Wilful, dogged demanding that it should be all in his own way, would never have brought the Risen One to Thomas. True, the Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene alone, to Peter alone, apparently to James alone; but to Thomas He would not appear during the eight days of His self-chosen solitude; as a sign, that he who avoids fellowship with the members, separates himself also from the Head of the members. But also on account of the other disciples did the Good Shepherd choose, in their midst, to lay Thomas on his shoulders. The doubter's misery had troubled the believers; therefore his gladness must also refresh them; and in beholding the mercy which was vouchsafed to one, all must rejoice in having a Lord and a God such as *their* Lord and God is. And let *us* too share

in this joy ; for this Jesus is also our Lord and our God. Be it then the same to us, as if it were taking place before our eyes, this that we now read.

Ver. 26. "*And after eight days again, His disciples were within, and Thomas with them : then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.*"

Jesus comes in exactly the same way as He had come before, exactly as the disciples had described it to Thomas. *Peace be unto you!* He says, and includes in this word even the poor grievous sinner, Thomas, in order that he, too, may have a joyful heart, and may not imagine that He has come to punish and reject him on account of his unbelief. No, dear Thomas ; peace be unto thee too ; fear not, I am not angry with thee ! And He loses no time in offering to Thomas in particular the peace which He had brought to all the disciples ; whilst Thomas, now no longer thought of asking for what he had previously made a condition of his faith, He says to Him :

Ver. 27. "*Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side : and be not faithless, but believing.*"

"Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness ; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil." More kindly had never sinner been reproved than in these oil-like words of the Lord to Thomas. The words of his sinful doubt now echo back to him from the lips of the omniscient Lord ; and, no doubt, he heard in them the reproach of most tender love : "Thomas, when thou wouldst not believe that I was alive, I saw thee !" (Comp. chap. i. 48). Thomas had said, "*Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails.*" Christ answers : "*Behold My hands!*" Thomas had said : "Except I *put my finger into the print of the nails*"—Christ answers : "*Reach hither thy finger!*" Thomas had said : "Except I *thrust my hand into His side*"—Christ answers : "*Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side.*" Thomas had said : "I will not believe"—Christ answers : "*Be not faithless, but believing!*" See how

the Lord Jesus keeps in view even every word!" And how affably does the Lord draw the disciple to Himself, and assigns a friend's privileges to him! With his hands he is allowed to touch those marks of His wounds, which Angels celebrate with songs of praise, and the sight of which will strike all the kindreds of the earth with fear! "In order," says Augustine, "to heal the wounds of doubt in the disciple's heart, He showed him the marks of His wounds upon His body." Truly, the heart of Jesus shines forth from out these scars. They are, as Gerhard has called them, the visible characters of the invisible mercy of God. In His state of glory, Jesus is not ashamed of them; they were not to be effaced from His glorified body, because He would fain convince us that the same love towards us dwells within Him now never to be extinguished, which led Him to submit to those wounds. And these the Lord showed to Thomas—to *that* Thomas who would not believe, unless he should put his finger into the print of the nails!

And thou, faint-heart, shouldest thou not yet have heard the voice of Jesus saying, "*Reach hither thy finger!*" Does not this all-tender Friend of souls still go out after all souls which are tormented with doubts respecting His goodness and truth, even towards themselves; and does He not shame them by His most profound sympathy with their weakness? Does He not, in His great patience, overlook even thy sinful—"I will not believe," and is satisfied in that He hears (for He hears even thy secret thoughts) that thou wouldst gladly believe, if thou wouldst only see and handle it? Only look back upon the course of thy life: there He stands, the dear Lord, and has stretched out the hand of His tenderness to bless thee in a thousand different ways! Thou didst trust Him so little, and He has bestowed upon thee so much blessing and happiness; thou didst doubt whether He would deliver thee from that deep distress, and—"Reach hither thy finger!"—He has gloriously done it; thou wouldst not believe that thou couldst go with Him through fire and water, and—"Reach hither thy finger!"—He has carried

thee through with a mighty arm ; thou wouldst not believe that He could fill thy dull, sick, barren, dark soul with joy and delight, with light and life, and—"Reach hither thy finger!"—in the light of His countenance. He has given thee to drink of pleasure as of river ; thou wouldst not believe that the love of Jesus could overcome that Saul, and carry him off as spoil, and—"Reach hither thy finger!"—now, like Ananias, thou seest that he prayeth, and is a believer ; thou wouldst not believe that the Lord was ruling in the midst of His enemies, and that the cause of His kingdom was passing through the vale of tears, onward to victory, and—"Reach hither thy finger!"—thou hast been delighted with Jerusalem ; her light became bright, her star arose !

"*Be not faithless, but believing!*" Was, then, a disciple-*faith* still necessary to Thomas, even though he now *saw*? Even so. All seeing and tasting in the kingdom of grace is given to us for the strengthening of our *faith*; and from him who does not receive it for this end, it will pass away without any fruit for eternal life. And, in order to believe, I must give myself up to God with a willing heart. The Lord, indeed, was drawing Thomas with the constraint of strong love to believe ; yet would He have ceased from him, and would have vanished like "a ghost," if the doubter had closed his heart against the warning—Be not faithless!

It is also not without meaning that the Lord says, *Be not faithless; i. e., be believing*, and not merely, *believe*! To be believing, is with true Christians their proper *condition of life*; they live not upon single glances of faith, but faith in Jesus Christ is the abiding motive sentiment of their whole life; Christ is their life. To this life of belief Thomas was now to rise in the power of the believed-in resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 28. "*And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God.*"

And he did rise ; he did become, as Luther phrases it, a true

"Riser again." Overpowered by the heart searching and yet so tender love which is seeking to win him, his heart breaks forth in the adoring confession, "*My Lord and my God!*" Thus Thomas said to *Him*, John says. Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen One, he calls his Lord and his God. Now did the word of comfort shine bright and clear to him: "Believe in *God*, believe also in *Me*" (chap. xiv. 1); now did the Spirit which shone forth from the wounds of the glorified Son of Man remind him of all that Jesus had said concerning His oneness with the Father. Before this, his thoughts had run thus: "Either He is God and Lord, in which case He cannot die; or else He dies, in which case He cannot be God and Lord: and now, alas! He *has* died!" But now in the Risen One he saw the contradiction gloriously explained which had before filled him with anguish, namely, that *God lay dead in the grave*; and with entire directness of thought he penetrates into the very midst of the mystery of our salvation. Laying his finger in the nail-prints of the Crucified and Risen One, Thomas confesses to have touched the body of his *God*: behold there the mysterious union of the two natures in Christ, by virtue of which the properties of the flesh which was taken by the eternal Word belong to the whole Person, which is God and Man; so that the expressions are justified which we employ in our formularies: *God died*; the *sufferings of God*; the *blood of God*; the *death of God*. Thus John is enabled to assure us that the apostles had seen with their eyes and handled with their hands the Word of Life (1 John i. 1), because they saw and handled the body which had become personally united with the Word (chap. i. 1-14).

There is still *one* little word in Thomas's confession which we must not overlook: he says to Christ, "*My Lord, and my God!*" *My*—it is thus that the faith which saves speaks. That Christ is the Lord and that He is God, the devils also "believe;" but the saving *my* they cannot utter for fear and trembling. With this word, which he twice repeats, Thomas

lays hold of Jesus Christ *for himself*, and soars with well-grounded confidence right into the Risen One's kingdom of peace.

Ver. 29. "*Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*"

"Thus from an unbelieving, unteachable, obstinate scholar, Thomas has become a very valuable theologian and doctor, one who rightly knows the Lord Jesus, both in His Person, and, therefore, also in His office. And this is clearly conveyed by the Lord's answer, when He says, *Because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed.* What does he believe? Not merely that Jesus, the son of Mary, is risen from the dead, and alive again; but also that He is God, and a God too who is ready to save all 'who believe on Him against death and sin, and who therefore must be worshipped with the true, eternal God. It is this faith which saves Thomas, and us too; as the Lord says, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believe what Thomas believes.*" (Luther.)

Thomas, because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed, the Lord says; thereby accepting the honour which the adoring disciple had paid Him of being the true God; but at the same time He desires to found upon an *eternal* foundation the blessedness which filled in this moment the heart of the *seeing* and believing one; and therefore He adds, *Blessed are they that see not, and yet believe.*

A Christian man knows how to be thankful for *every* word from the mouth of Jesus; but some there are amongst His words which most especially draw him down upon his knees and put upon his lips the sacrifice of praise: I thank Thee my Saviour, I yield Thee eternal thanks! And such a word is this: "*Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*" Thomas worshipped Jesus as his Lord and his God, because he has *seen* Him; let us, when we hear this promise of blessedness from His mouth, extol His love, which has allured

us to the confession of His glorious Name. For we, yes, even we are embraced by the love which caused Him to utter this word; in concern for our blessedness did He supply the want of our eyes, and lay Himself with all the fulness of His heavenly blessings in the *word*, which filled with the Spirit resounds in His holy Church, and in the *Sacraments*, the holy mystery of which is His God-man's presence. The word, which believers trust, the written and preached word, Christ makes precious to us, in declaring them blessed who believe without seeing; and most appropriately therefore does John add: "*But these (signs) are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through His Name.*"

Thomas laid hold of life by faith in Jesus as his Lord and his God; that which was *shown* to him stands *written* for us; and with him we too are blessed, when we allow ourselves to be convinced by the Scriptures that this is the true God and eternal life. Having attained to belief in Him through the word of the apostles, who saw Him (chap. xvii. 20), we belong to the number of those blessed ones, of whom Peter—with a feeling of shame—says, that they, having *not seen* Jesus, yet *love* Him, and that in Him, though they *see* Him *not*, they yet *believe* (1 Pet. i. 8).

Or what? should we still really say with the *old* Thomas: "Except I see it, I will not believe?" That be far from us! Rather we know that by faith we get possession in very truth of the Unseen One, according to the explanation which the Holy Ghost gives of faith, reminding us of the Lord's word to Thomas: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. xi. 1). Moses walked in faith; for he clung to Him whom he saw not, as if he saw Him (Heb. xi. 27). The old writers say: "To trust when we see not, is faith; to see, as we have trusted, is the reward of faith." Of this reward of faith we are even here below to be allowed a foretaste; for even here we *taste* and *see* how gracious the Lord

is (Ps. xxxiv. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 3); but we shall reap this reward without ceasing and in perfect fulness, when that will appear which as yet we see not (Heb. ii. 8), when Jesus will be made manifest, and we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Pet. i. 7, 8).

But Thomas also was not only then blessed, but also continued blessed; not because he saw and *therefore* believed during that hour of sight, but because he became obedient to the Lord's word: "*Be not faithless, but believing.*" Even when the Ascended One had been snatched away from his eyes and hands, he yet, with the eye of faith, saw what was hidden; and when, according to an old tradition, at the close of a long life of testimony, which had filled many countries with the gospel, he was required by his heathen persecutors to deny Christ by worshipping the sun, he chose rather to die than to be silent concerning the name of Jesus, *that* Sun whom in assured faith he worshipped to the very last: "*My Lord and my God!*"

It is the Lord!

CHAPTER XXI. 1-14.

THE Lord's promise having directed them to Galilee, the disciples proceeded thither as soon as the Feast of Passover was ended, in order to be ready at the appointed day and place (Matt. xxviii. 16) for the promised appearance of the Risen One. In the meantime, before this day, with its appointed joy for all the believers of Galilee, had come, seven of the disciples were together at the Lake of Gennesaret (or the sea of Tiberias); perhaps they were guests of Peter's, who owned a house in the adjoining town of Capernaum (Matt. viii. 14). They were not to-day expecting a visit from their Lord. But this very day Peter is to entertain *that* guest whom once before on the Lake of Gennesaret he received into his fishing-boat (Luke v. 3); and he is again to hear that, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men!" first by deed expressed in a draught of fishes blessed anew, and afterwards by word of mouth in the command: "Feed my sheep!" He had now good reason to know that he was "a sinful man." Through his denial he had shown himself unworthy of his calling of being a fisher of men, a shepherd of Jesus's sheep; therefore the gracious Saviour feels Himself constrained anew to acknowledge the penitent with abounding love, in order that in the presence of his brethren He may give him the comforting assurance that he really has part in the joy of Easter, as also in the commission and blessing of the apostolic office. By giving His blessing the Lord desires to give the increase to His servant's labour, to refresh him in

Himself, and to refresh His own self in him ; and Peter's apostolic life was henceforth to be passed in the comfort and light of the word : "*It is the Lord !*"

Such is the substance of this particular revelation of the risen Lord ; and we will now proceed to consider the several particulars, which John dwells upon with lingering love.

Ver. 1, 2. "*After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias ; and on this wise showed he Himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples.*"

With Simon Peter were the six disciples that were the most closely connected with him, four of whom John mentions by name : *Thomas*, he is first named, doubtless, because being the last born babe (1 Pet. ii. 2) he was especially dear to Peter ; *Nathanael* (probably the apostle who was surnamed *Bartholomew*) of Cana in Galilee, where the Lord wrought His first miracle, who was amongst the first-fruits of the disciples, and was called at the same time with Peter (ch. i. 45) ; the two *sons of Zebedee*, namely, *James* and *John* himself, who were Peter's two companions at that first draught of fishes, and afterwards in many never to be forgotten hours. The other two disciples, whose names John does not mention, perhaps because it was an understood thing for the readers of his gospel that they would be in this company with Peter, we may conjecture to have been Peter's brother *Andrew*, and his countryman *Philip* of Bethsaida, who once had brought Nathanael to Jesus (ch. i. 44, 45). Or might John not have known exactly which two they were ? If so, then his silence respecting things which he did not know (and certainly the evangelists were not omniscient) serves to vouch for the simple truthfulness with which he gives his account (comp. ver. 23).

Ver. 3. "*Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and*"

entered into a ship immediately ; and that night they caught nothing."

As now the disciples were talking together of all their Easter experiences, for of that with which their heart was full, their mouth would naturally overflow ; as their eyes kept involuntarily turning towards the not distant hill, where the Bridegroom of their souls had promised to gladden them with His visible presence ; as their hearts were burning with the glow of ardent love, though at the same time trembling with a strange feeling of sorrow and fear, for the appearing and disappearing of the body of their love was to them a mystery of mingled sweetness and bitterness, and the reminder : "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended !" had not yet been unfolded for them in the fulness of its comfort ; as they were thus giving themselves up to the delicious pain of their longing, and were diving with inquiring minds into the future of their apostolic life—Simon Peter suddenly says to them, "*I go a fishing!*" What ! thou dost ask, could Peter have any thoughts now about *fishing* ? Was it for this the Lord had directed the disciples to Galilee, that they might again hunt out their nets, and catch fish in the Lake of Gennesaret ?

In fact many have therefore blamed Peter and his companions who were so ready to agree to his proposal ; they have thought the disciples meant to return again to their fishing, because they despaired of their apostleship. But no ; such could never have been the meaning of this fishing ; for how then would the Lord afterwards have Himself blessed the nets of the fishermen ? But yet it will hardly bear *that* meaning which applied later to the Apostle Paul's tent-making. It would indeed have been no degradation to the seven apostles, if, earning their daily bread by the labour of their hands, they had even now gone fishing for their support. "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it," the Lord had said to them (Luke xxii. 36) ; why then should they not take their nets ? Yet it would appear from St. John's graphic narrative, as if the sober (comp. Acts

ii. 15), practical Peter purposely wished to tear his guests away from their conflicting thoughts, and by the labour of fishing to close the door against Satan, that he might not have the opportunity of slipping in any new doubts, either in the mind of Thomas or some other of their number. However, whatever Peter's idea might have been, his fellow-disciples at once agreed to the plan: "*We also go with thee,*" they said to him, and they immediately entered into the ship; but the whole night they *caught nothing*.

Ver. 4. "*But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*"

Three years before, in the same place, Simon Peter and his companions had also laboured a whole night and taken nothing (Luke v. 5). After they had been labouring in vain throughout this present night, did they not think on *that* night and the morning which followed? Was there not already now rising up in their thoughts a faint whisper, "*It is the Lord?*"—for assuredly it was He, now as then, who kept the disciples' nets empty in this lake which was so full of fish, in spite of all their nocturnal labour, in order to carry on with them the holy wonder-working of His love. It is not only when our labour is crowned with blessing and success that the Lord's hand is to be traced, but also when it has its nearest blessing withdrawn from it. He will have us feel our powerlessness, in order that He may humble and *afterwards* exalt us—"He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna" (Deut. viii. 3).

Now when the morning-red lighted up the shore, behold, *Jesus stood on the shore*. He came not, but He *stood* there (Comp. chap. xx. 19). But His presence was veiled from the eyes of the disciples; *they knew not that it was Jesus*. Again their eyes were holden, so that they knew Him not in His beauty, which is more beauteous far than the morning-red. They were to recognise Him to-day, not by His form, but by His work.

Ver. 5. "*Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No.*"

He calls them by the tender name of *children* (Comp. 1 John ii. 18); they were His *brethren*, His *friends*, His dear *children*. He is indeed called "the Everlasting Father" (Isa. ix. 6).

He then *asks* them for the fishes which they had not caught. Somewhat shortly and almost impatiently the disciples answered the unknown mendicant: "*No!*" They were doubtless known for their generosity to many a poor man on the shore of this lake. "The righteous is ever merciful, and lendeth." As they came in from the sea, hungry ones were wont to approach on the shore. Although this time there was no fish for the beggar, yet doubtless there would be a piece of bread remaining from their store of provisions. But they looked forward for the day which was now dawning, and therefore they are somewhat annoyed that this man should just now stand there and beg. So this time their answer is—*No*. And this time it is in His own person—the Lord!

Ver. 6. "*And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it up for the multitude of fishes.*"

As once before He had commanded them to launch out into the *deep* and there let down their nets (Luke v. 4), so now He points out to them the direction in which to cast their net—on the *right* side of the ship. On that other occasion, it was contrary to their fisher's art that He should send them out into the deep part of the lake, where it is most unusual for fishes to go into the net; here too was it contrary to their art, that they should throw their net on the right side of the ship, when they had just turned themselves away from the right to the left. But yet they obey. Either they imagined that this guest, who had invited himself to their table, might be better acquainted than they with the lucky parts of the lake, or else they had a presentiment whose mouth it was that had uttered these words

of confident command and promise; but however, in short, they cast the net on the right side of the ship, *and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.* The word of the Lord made good its almighty power; the fishes in the sea, which are also His, and which declare His honour (Job xii. 8), followed His beck to the right side of the ship; and the result was the same as it had been before. *When they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; except that this time the net did not break, but came whole to land, although they had not at hand the crew of a second ship to help them to draw* (Luke v. 6, 7).

Ver. 7, 8. "*Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits); dragging the net with fishes.*"

It was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, who also leaned on his breast: he it was who with most faithful memory first recognised *the Lord*, who now again had blessed their net. Just as the cry, "*Mary*," had thrilled through Mary Magdalene, so also did the Lord's well-known hand of blessing find its way into the heart of the beloved disciple. "Here thou seest that love is the source of all saving knowledge." (J. Gerhard.) With entire devotion did John's soul, a vessel filled with the love of Jesus, turn to the Author of her life; and whilst the other disciples, even Peter, are still busily engaged in drawing the crowded net and securing the fishes contained in it, his God-seeking eye has already with affectionate joy discerned the glory of the only-begotten Son. "*It is the Lord!*" he whispers to Peter, with whom he had lately stood by the empty grave of the Risen One.

Peter at this started up. The full net falls from his hands; quickly he lays aside his fisher's apron, girds his coat about him, and *casts himself into the sea.** Again he took up the

words: "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water" (Matt. xiv. 28); and this time he doubted not. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke v. 8)—thus had Peter once spoken, when he had recognised in Jesus *the Lord* in His revealed glory. Oh, how much better since then had he learnt to know this Lord! For now, when he hears, "*It is the Lord!*" he casts himself into the sea to go to Him; for his impetuous love the ship was rowing too slowly, and the two hundred cubits to the shore seemed to him a mile. No longer must the Lord depart from the terrified sinner Simon Peter; no, the pardoned sinner hastens into his Saviour's arms.

John too had already sent forth his heart; but, filled with calm devotion, he helped the other disciples to draw the net of blessing, and with unenvious joy beheld his brother Peter in the ardour of his love go before them all.

"We may here see set forth in a most pleasing manner the manifold nature of the gifts possessed by the holy men of God. John is the first to recognise the Lord, yet he is not the first to hasten towards Him; but Peter quickly outstrips him in zeal and comes before him; just as it was John who came first to the sepulchre, but did not venture to go in, whilst Peter, who reached the sepulchre after him, straightway entered. The other disciples are not envious because John recognised Christ before they did; neither like Peter do they cast themselves into the sea; but they follow him in the ship to the Lord Christ; for they were not so strong in faith as to be able to make for themselves a way through the sea at the risk of their lives. This diversity of gifts is well calculated to exercise us in humility. They who have been possessed by higher gifts, and enlightened with greater knowledge of Christ, may devote their gifts to the advantage of their brethren, as here John kindles Peter with his knowledge, so that he hastens to meet Christ; whilst the other disciples place themselves with true and sincere humility under these two, because they are endowed with a stronger faith and with greater gifts than they. *If only we*

all come to Christ ! Just as Peter reaches the shore and comes to Christ through the midst of the water of the sea, whilst John is borne thither by the ship; even so some pious souls are brought out of the sea of this life to the haven of salvation, and to behold the face of Christ through the bloody, violent death of the martyr, whilst others are brought thither through the quiet and gentle hour in which they breathe their last in their bed. Therefore we may venture in faith boldly to yield ourselves up to God, and bravely to trample under foot every suffering, ay, and even death; since we know that there is but a short span between our temporal tribulation and the haven of eternal rest,—as here the disciples were but two hundred cubits distant from the shore.” (J. Gerhard.)

“*It is the Lord !*” This voice sounds from out the mouth of a John into the ear of a Peter, as often as the unwearied love of Jesus anew finds our heart in ways of blessing which it has before imprinted upon our remembrance. “No other hand thus blesses—it is the Lord !” this is the confession of them who are the blessed of the Lord, and whose experience of divine guidance sets its seal to the truth, that God is a *faithful* God, the same God to His people both yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We have done nothing to deserve that He should keep His faithfulness towards us, as little as Peter had deserved that this second draught of fishes should follow upon the first. Ah, have we not also many sins which lie between every former and every new experience of the love of our God, between every former and every new partaking of the Lord’s Supper, between every former and every new hearing and understanding of the word, between every former and every new answering of prayer and strengthening of faith? Have we not also denied the Lord who has blessed us, denied Him either in our heart, or with our mouth, or by our life? Therefore, does not every fresh manifestation of His mercy remind us of a former favour which we but ill thanked Him for, and does not every approach of the Lord to us, every invitation of His blessed hand and His

gracious word: "Come ye to me!" contain for us unthankful children a: "Return ye to me!" Yes, as often as we know Thee *again*, O Lord, so often is the disciple whom Thou lovest saying to the disciple who has grieved thee: "*It is the Lord!*"

Praised be Jesus Christ, that He is the Lord! To be tender, merciful, long-suffering, daily and abundantly to forgive us our sins, this is His delight. May our whole life be illuminated by His gracious nearness to us even to the end! May He never be terrible to us! When we come to die, may He then help us to die; and may we have a brother to comfort us with the sweet assurance, "*It is the Lord!*" And when hereafter the angels, with far-sounding trumpets, shall greet the earth as it is lighted up by the morning-red of eternity, and when the sign of the coming Son of man shall appear in heaven, then may the cry, "*It is the Lord!*" which shall joyfully resound from the lips of every one beloved by Jesus, find us, too, ready to answer with Alleluias, and our soul, being clothed upon with the body of the resurrection, be caught up with blessed Peter-like haste, into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air! Amen.

Ver. 9-12. "*As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art thou? knowing it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.*"

For *whom* then had the Lord begged on the shore? For *Himself*, for *Himself alone*? The burning coals seem to them like the heart of Jesus, and the fish thereon are the echo to their "No,"—an echo full of shame for them, full of rapture. As if he would say: Ye had nothing to spare for Me when I begged of you, and yet I am well acquainted with the state of your store-chamber; ye were putting Me off with a cold No.

Ye redden like these coals? No, fear not, it is but the reflexion of *My* coals! See what I had already prepared for you, not bread alone, but fried fish besides, and all this ready just as ye are coming hungry to Him whose hunger ye refused to satisfy. Therefore “*bring of the fish which ye have now caught.*” Thus He permits them to bring and to bestow upon Him what He Himself had previously given. And even more had He given them than they would need for to-day and to-morrow: *an hundred and fifty and three* great fishes Peter drew to land in the unbroken net. Thus then they were in no want until their journey back to Jerusalem.

As they were now dining, and the Lord Jesus, in the fatherly way which on other occasions had been His wont, was to-day also distributing amongst them the bread and meat which they hardly dared to eat with Him: *none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.* None durst ask Him, none was bold enough for that. The infinitely condescending manner, like their own Jesus, in which the Lord of glory was here dealing with them, drove away in a moment every doubt which might perhaps still have been stirring within them, and foolish and slow to believe as their hearts were by nature, *inclined* as they were to be again affrighted, and to suppose that it was a spirit before them; yet *to-day* such thoughts *durst* not spring up; Satan no longer ventured to disturb the joy of this meal.

Oh, those are blessed hours in the Christian's life, when the soul, filled with the love of God which by faith she has tasted, dares not ask, *ventures not* to ask, *Who art Thou? knowing* that it is *the Lord*, in whose love she is reposing.

If that first draught of fishes which the Lord blessed to His disciple had for him the prophetic meaning that under like circumstances of blessing he should catch men in the gospel net for the kingdom of heaven, and if the Lord, in this second draught of fishes confirmed this promise to His apostle after his recovery from his deep fall, as a sign*to him that He did not

repent of the promise : so also does this meal which the Lord here prepares for Peter and the other apostles *after* the draught of fishes, contain within itself a promise, and shadow forth a spiritual meal, the meal which we find described in Canticles, ch. v. i, where the bridegroom eats with the bride, and she with Him. (Comp. Rev. iii. 20.) "*Children, have ye here any meat ?*" the Lord says. The fruit of the toil undergone by His "fishers of men,"—that fruit with which He would fain refresh Himself, are the men who have been led to Him through the word, and whom He has bought for Himself from the earth. But neither apostle nor teacher leads even so much as one sinner to repentance, unless the Lord Himself gives repentance ; the word of our preaching finds not a single soul, unless the Lord Himself points out for it the direction—*on the right side of the ship*—into the sinner's heart which He Himself has "opened." For it is the Lord, He alone, who gives the increase (1 Cor. iii. 7). Praised be God, He stands ready with His help close to the sea where His servants are fishing ; His voice reaches across to them from the shore, forwarding the work of their hands. But when, at the end of the world, the ship of the Church shall come to land, and shall secure the booty of the great draught of fishes, taken in the unbroken net of the one gospel, in the harbour of peace, and when the fishermen of Jesus shall hear from His mouth the word : "*Bring of the fish which ye have caught !*" then, at the sight of the redeemed around the Throne of the Lamb, they will clearly perceive with humiliation and shame that the Lord had indeed no need of *their* labour, and will adore the graciousness of His free love, which has so ordered it, that lost sinners are to be turned to righteousness by means of pardoned sinners (Comp. ch. iv. 37, 38). And then, together with Jesus the King and the princes of His kingdom, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, there shall sit down at this heavenly meal the twelve holy apostles, and all who have believed through their word ; ay, at this meal the hope even of a Paul will be fulfilled, which he ex-

presses in those words to the Thessalonians : " For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming ? For ye are our glory and joy ? " The Lord will allow us to find in His lap, and will also receive from our hands, that which we have laboured for ; He will grant us eternal joy, which He Himself will share with us, in those souls which it has been His will to save through our poor service ; that so both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together (ch. iv. 36). "*Come and dine !*" will be His gracious invitation ; and although then the unprofitable servants will not at once be able to realise the honour and reward of sharing with their Lord the joy of this blessed meal, yet with brotherly love He will condescend to them and take away from them every feeling of bashfulness, even as He did with His disciples by the lake of Gennesaret : *Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.* It is the Lord ! Alleluia.

Ver. 14. "*This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples, after that He was risen from the dead.*"

John does not say : This is altogether the third time that the risen Lord showed Himself ; but he expressly adds, *to His disciples.* This was the third of those revelations of Himself which He vouchsafed to His disciples *in a body* (or, as here, to, at any rate, seven of them together), and which had reference to their apostolic office. Such revelations of the Risen One were in all *five*. He appeared : 1st, to ten disciples on Easter Day ; 2d, to eleven disciples eight days after ; 3d, to seven disciples here on the Sea of Tiberias ; 4th, to eleven disciples (together with five hundred brethren) on the mountain in Galilee ; 5th, to eleven disciples at the time of His ascension. The other half of the consecrated number, *ten*, which makes up the series of the Risen One's appearances, consists of those which fell to the share of the female disciples, and of *single* disciples ; namely : 1st, to Mary Magdalene ; 2d, to the other

Galilean women ; 3d, to Simon Peter ; 4th, to the two disciples from Emmaus ; 5th, to James. Thus has the Lord seen fit to give scope to the delight which He takes in symmetry and order, even in the twice five exhibitions of His glory. All the more indelibly on this account should the history of these glorious forty days be imprinted in the memory of our hearts.

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?

CHAPTER XXI. 15-23.

IN the draught of fishes which the seven disciples obtained by the Lord's blessing, they had given them a pledge of spiritual blessing in the discharge of their office ; and they had partaken of a meal prepared by Jesus for their refreshment as a pledge of the joy which awaited them when they should sit down at table with the Lord in the kingdom of glory. This we have been considering in the previous section. The Lord's converse with Peter, which now follows, is connected with what goes before in the closest manner. Peter, through his denial, had rendered himself wholly unworthy of the precious office of being a fisher of men : *now*, after his conversion (Luke xxii. 32), will it come to pass, that in true faithfulness he will lay hold of and retain the promise contained in this second draught of fishes and in the meal which followed ? The indispensable condition on which alone he can inherit the promised blessing is now pressed upon his heart ; and this is, perfect devotion to the Lord Jesus ; a life of sacrifice in that *love* which is stronger than death. The confession of this love from the disciple's lips draws after it the word from the Lord's mouth—the word : “ *Feed My sheep !* ” and again, the other word : “ *Follow thou Me !* ”

Ver. 15. “ *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these ? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.* ”

The meal was now over. The Lord had been discoursing

with His disciples concerning the *kingdom of God* (Acts i. 3), as the sum of His former and of their future preaching (Matt. xiii. 9 ; Luke ix. 11). What He said was addressed to them all. Yet, was it not likely that He should have something especial to say to His disciple Peter, when love to him was surely the chief cause of this appearance by the Lake of Gennesaret, and when He had seen that this revelation of His glory had gone to his heart the most deeply of all the seven ? The six other disciples, we may conceive, were to be to-day principally witnesses of what passed between the Lord and Peter ; in order that they might no longer have any doubt that the peace of the Crucified and Risen One was the portion and the consolation of this disciple likewise. They no doubt, when they saw him bitterly weeping (which John had done at the place of his denial) had tenderly comforted him with the assurances of their brotherly sympathy : now the Lord solemnly confirms their words of comfort and absolution.

Jesus accordingly speaks to Simon Peter : "*Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these ?*" Simon, son of Jonas, He calls him, by his father's name. Simon, son of Jonas, had only then been changed into Simon *Peter*, when grace had in the smelting furnace purified his nature into enamel, when faith in Christ, the Son of the living God, the Rock of salvation, had transformed himself into a rock. Daily to become more and more Simon *Peter*, was the holy problem of Simon, son of Jonas' life ; and this was fulfilled when Christ dwelt in his heart by faith, and he became rooted and grounded in Him through love (Eph. iii. 17). In proportion as Simon, son of Jonas, loved Jesus, in that proportion was he a Peter. The Lord, by commanding Simon, son of Jonas, who professes to love Him, to feed His flock, virtually calls him Peter.

"*Lovest thou Me more than these ?*" There was a time when Peter would without reflecting have answered *Yes* to this question ; or did he not say when on his way to the Mount of Olives, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I

never be offended?" Assuredly the Lord's question is meant gently to remind him of this. But we shall not enter into its full meaning until we view it in connexion with what had previously occurred. Had not really Peter's love surpassed the love of his fellow-disciples in his ardent longing to behold Jesus, when he had cast himself into the sea to go to the Lord? To him more had been *forgiven* than to all the rest: therefore might it not be that he also *loved* more than all the rest? (Luke vii. 47). But what appears so surpassingly beautiful on the part of the now humbled disciple is, that in simplicity and pure modesty he passes over the *more*, and says, "*Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.*"

Thou knowest that I love Thee. He ventures no longer to trust himself, no longer to trust his own conviction of the sincerity and strength of his love, but he appeals to the knowledge of the Searcher of hearts—that knowledge which from time to time he had experienced, but which had been at the last so perfectly made good in his case (Jer. xvii. 9; Acts i. 24). That I love Thee, O Lord—he would say—does not indeed come from myself, but from Thee: therefore Thou knowest exactly what Thy love has imparted to me!

Happy the soul which with Peter can say this! There are hours when we are almost constrained to utter the sigh, Ah Lord, let me only believe that *Thou* knowest that I love Thee; for *I* can hardly venture to call my poor wretched feeling by the name of love. The personal love which exists between the believing soul and her Saviour is the deep working of the Holy Spirit, of which no one knows anything save the soul which experiences it; and he who is favoured with the blessed assurance of loving with true, actual love, Him who is God's and Mary's Son, who though in heaven is yet infinitely near to faith; he who embraces Him and lays himself on His breast, crying, "My Lord Jesus!"—such an one rejoices with trembling, and rests his sure comfort on this, that the Lord knows what is the

mind of the Spirit, when the Spirit's unutterable groans are the only language which we can employ.

The Lord knows that Simon, son of Jonas, loves Him; for He says to him, "*Feed My lambs!*" He commits what *He* loves to the care of the man who loves *Him*. As, when the daughter of Zion was longing for His Shepherd's care, asking Him, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul lovest, where thou feedest?" He answered her in the gracious words, "Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents" (Cant. i. 7, 8): so here He calls the disciple whom He loves to follow in His footsteps who is the good Shepherd; He appoints him to be the shepherd of His lambs. His *lambs*, whom He carries in His bosom (Isa. xl. 11), who need the most watchful care of His tender love,—these are to be tended and fed by the love which loves Him, and therefore also all that belong to Him (1 John v. 1, 2). Thus *to love Jesus* is the first requisite for holding the office which is entrusted to Peter. Out of love to Jesus, to give Him pleasure and satisfaction (Isa. liii. 11), it is for this that faithful shepherds feed the lambs of Jesus. The shepherd's office is "a good work," a noble function (1 Tim. iii. 1); good and precious also because it *costs* much: it costs a heart *entirely* taken up by Jesus, a life offered as a perfect sacrifice to Him (Rom. xv. 16). Faithfully to discharge the duties of this office, patiently to bear its hardships, willingly to endure persecution from its savage enemies, the devil and the world, and victoriously to overcome them—this can only be really done by the man in whose heart the *love of Christ* reigns, and who is so "constrained" (1 Cor. v. 14) thereby, that he accounts as loss all this world's gain, and that his only aim is the glory of God in the salvation of lost sinners. When afterwards Peter wrote to his fellow-shepherds, "Feed the flock of Christ—not by constraint, but *willingly*—not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind," he doubtless had in his mind the question, Love ye Him?

Ver. 16. "*He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord,*

Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep."

Peter thanks the Lord in the stillness of his heart for no longer asking concerning the *strength* of his love, whether it is greater than the love of his fellow-disciples; for he has now experienced what a true lover of Jesus says:

"Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love thee, and adore,
Oh, for grace to love thee more!" *

Ver. 17. "*He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*"

Dost thou really love Me as thou sayest? † What importance the Lord attaches to the love of His people, when He three times asks this question! When one friend asks another, when the bridegroom asks the bride, "Dost thou love me?" it gives deep pleasure; for he who asks whether thou lovest him, desires to be loved by thee, and his question concerning *thy* love proceeds from *his* love to thee. Peter surely felt how dear he was to his Jesus, who three times had asked him, "*Lovest thou Me?*" But yet he was *grieved*; for he remembered that three times he had denied Him who had now been three times

* Borrowed by the translator from Cowper.

† The *one* word rendered by *love* [in our English version as well as] in the German, in all the three questions and answers, stands instead of *two* Greek words (agapan and philein), of which the first expresses more the unreserved self-surrender of love, and the second more the hearty leaning of love towards its object. Twice the Lord had asked, "Does thy soul *cling* to thy Lord?" (agapas); and twice had Peter answered, "Thou knowest that my soul goes out towards thee with *longing* (philo) as to her Beloved." When the Lord asks the third time, He takes up Peter's word, and says, "Thus *heartily* lovest (phileis) thou Me, thy Beloved?" And again in his answer, Peter for the third time calls his love, philo—"My beloved is mine, and I am his" (Cant. ii. 16).

asking him whether he loved Him. But this sadness has not in it the smallest tinge of resentment against the Lord ; it is *that* sadness which *forgiven* sin awakes in the soul, as often as Jesus reminds us what we once were, and what we should be without Him. If He deems it for our good, through the discipline of His love, to question us more than once concerning our love to Him, we may then be *grieved* at *ourselves*, but we cannot feel resentment against *Him*, for it is out of pure love that He thus grieves us. In that sadness of his, so acceptable to God, Peter lays open his whole heart, and speaks : “*Lord, Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee.*” Lord—he would say—from the first Thou hast well known Thy Simon, whom Thou didst once call Cephas. It was impossible that Thou shouldst be deceived, when Thou didst foretell my grievous fall ; for Thou knowest *all things* ; Thou triest the hearts and reins. But since Thou, my Lord and my God, knowest all things, it is not only my weakness that is known to Thee, but likewise the sincerity of my soul ; if Thou still seest some hidden fault in any fold of my heart, yet Thou also seest that in my spirit there is no guile. His own heart would at last condemn poor Peter, that he loves not Jesus ; but from this verdict he appeals to One who “is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”

And thus Peter dared *three times* to confess that he loved Him whom he had *three times* denied. “It was fitting that a threefold confession should follow upon the threefold denial, in order that the tongue might not render greater service to fear than to love, and that threatening death might not boast of having drawn from him more words than present life.” (Augustine.) The fear of death which threatened him three times denied the Shepherd of the sheep : the three-fold love which he confessed for the Life that was present is three times entrusted with the office of feeding the Shepherd’s flock ; for Jesus says to Simon Peter for the third time, “*Feed My sheep.*” *Lambs*

and *sheep*, the whole flock: so John writes to *children*, to *young men*, to *fathers* (1 John ii. 13, &c.).

“*Feed my sheep.*” Let us look at these words somewhat more closely, weighing each one separately. The simile of the shepherd and his sheep, which the Holy Ghost has so much prized even in the Old Testament (for example, Ezek. xxxiv.), has been exalted to high renown by the Lord in His discourse in chap. x. It here connects itself with the parable (by act) of the draught of fishes: *fishermen* are Christ’s servants as being *missionaries*, and *shepherds* (pastors) as being *elders*. *Peter* is to feed the sheep of Jesus. Not as having received for himself *alone* the shepherd’s office, and with power to make it over to his successors in Rome, as the papists vainly dream. For he himself, in his epistle, writes as an elder to his *fellow elders*: “Feed the flock of Christ which is among you, taking the oversight thereof” (1 Pet. v. 2). Therefore what is said here to the one apostle applies to all (comp. chap. xx. 21, &c.; Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15); and as it applies to all the apostles, so it does likewise to all who are called to the shepherd’s office in the Church (Acts xx. 28; Eph. iv. 11). All the shepherds bear *one* office; all together are properly only *one*, by virtue of the Spirit which works within them. “All are shepherds, but there is only one flock, which it is the business of all the shepherds to feed with oneness of mind,” says Cyprian; and thus Augustine: “The apostles were many, but to only one of them is it said, Feed my sheep; see here how Christ commends the *oneness* of the Church.” Praised be the Lord, who puts to shame the falsely extolled unity, in which His sheep are fed at once with Yea and Nay (2 Cor. i. 18); but who supports and honours the true unity, such as is well-pleasing to Him, in which but one shepherd’s voice is heard and known by the sheep, namely, *His* voice! (ch. x. 16)!

Feed My *sheep*. Both *sheep* and *lambs* the Saviour calls His, thereby commending their weakness and helplessness to the shepherd’s fostering love. Whether they be sheep which

are as yet still lost, or whether they be sheep which have been found: both are loved by Him, the good Shepherd; and it should be the blessed business of all who love Him to follow Him as well in His seeking of the lost, as in His carrying home of them which are found.

Feed *My* sheep. His sheep they are, not only by right of creation (Ps. c. 3), but especially by right of redemption (Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. i. 19). That they are *His* sheep whom we pastors feed, may well give us comfort, but it should also fill us with fear and trembling. It should comfort us—because we have not again by our labour amongst them to “redeem” those of whom we have the charge; that would indeed “cost more” than we could pay; they *are* redeemed, indeed, *all* of them; and it is the Lord’s earnest desire that all should come to the knowledge of this truth—namely, that he has purchased them with His own blood. Did we not know that each one, even the sinner, who has strayed the furthest, that *all* whom in the name of Jesus it is our business to call to repentance, *can* be saved on account of the ransom which has been paid for him—because for the whole world (1 John ii. 2)—on account of the love of God which in Christ is resting upon him; did we not know that to each one believer, even to the very weakest, whom it is our business in the name of Jesus to tend, the promise belongs: “No man shall pluck My sheep out of My hand” (chap. x. 28): oh, then a pastor’s labour would indeed be too heavy! But let this *My—My* sheep—not only comfort, but let it be to us also a warning not to destroy or by unfaithfulness injure ought of the “possession” which the Lord has “purchased” for Himself at so dear a price, and in feeding His sheep, never to seek our own, but always *His* honour. “Think not of feeding thyself, but My sheep; feed them as being My sheep, and not thine; seek in them My honour, and not thine own honour; My authority, not thine own, mine, not thine own gain.” (Augustine.)

Feed My sheep. The *feeding* includes every duty of the

holy office : *giving food, leading, protecting, healing*, are all included in feeding the sheep.

Giving food to the sheep is the shepherd's first duty. And with what is he to feed the sheep of Jesus? St. Paul answers: With the mysteries of God, of which Christ's ministers are appointed stewards (1 Cor. iv. 1). Now the mysteries of God, the treasures of His grace which is hidden from the world, are the word and sacraments—the means whereby God mysteriously teaches and works. Luther (in his valuable dedication of his exposition of the first twenty-two psalms to the Elector Frederick) thus rightly extols the *feeding* of the sheep which was committed to Peter: "As if Christ had said to Peter: Command, give orders to—and not rather, *feed* My ship, that is, tell them where they may find pasture! But their pasture they find in the word of God alone, and not in the opinions and ordinances of men." Just as a shepherd does not himself bring forth the fodder wherewith to feed his sheep, but feeds them on the green pastures of the almighty Creator; and as a faithful steward does not curtail to his master's servants their due, but gives them their portion of meat in due season (Luke xii. 42); so is it also with the shepherds and stewards in the kingdom of grace. Thereby they prove themselves to be honest, blameless labourers, by rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. ii. 15), by not corrupting the word of God (1 Cor. iv. 2), but by feeding and watering souls unto eternal life with unadulterated doctrine, and with sound words which cannot be condemned (Titus ii. 7, 8). The more shepherds themselves hunger after the food with which they feed the souls committed to them, the more faithful and the greater blessing will they be. Therefore St. Paul exhorts Timothy to give heed, not only to *teaching*, but also to *reading* (1 Tim. iv. 13). He who desires to *water* must himself *draw* water. No man can be a right sort of shepherd to the flock of Jesus, who does not himself, as a lamb and sheep of this flock, feed on Jesus's pasture. O Lord, in all our feeding of others, may we feed ourselves likewise!

The shepherd goes before the sheep (chap. x. 4), and *leads* them, as "ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. v. 3; comp. also Tit. ii. 7, and many other passages). As the doctrine of true shepherds is life within them, so again their life itself is holy doctrine. Their peaceful life proclaims the virtues of Him to whom they invite and lead souls; their life hidden in God is made manifest by fruits, to the edifying of the Church. Gregory says: "Thou must first dip the pen into thine own heart if thou wouldst have it write the truth legibly in the hearts of others." May the Lord ever vouchsafe such shepherds to His Church, which may feed her as Basil the Great did, of whom Gregory of Nazianzus says, "His words work like thunder, because His life was the lightning to the thunder;" and, as a Nicolaus Hausmanni did, of whom Luther writes: *Quod nos docemus, ille vixit, What we teach he lived.*

The shepherd *guards* the sheep, protects and defends them from the wolf who comes to catch and to scatter them (chap. x. 12, 15). St. Paul exhorts the elders of the Ephesian Church faithfully to discharge their bishop's (overseer's) office, by protecting the flock entrusted to them from "grievous wolves" (Acts xx. 29). The grievous wolves, who spare not the flock, either come from without, or else they rise up in the midst of the flock itself; either they confuse and seduce hearts by corrupt doctrine, or else by wicked life. From these outward and inward dangers, shepherds, who are not hirelings, protect the sheep committed to their care: they know them, and therefore they are able to admonish them (1 Thess. v. 12), and to convince gainsayers (Tit. i. 9).

But when a sheep of the flock sickens, the shepherd's feeding then becomes a *healing* and helping. To seek out the lost, to bring back the straying, to bind up the bruised, to heal the sick, to strengthen the weak (Ezek. xxxiv.)—this is what shepherds do in the Saviour's Name; whenever they hear confession, and dispense absolution and sacrament, they tend the sheep of Jesus with *healing*. But not only by comforting do they heal,

but also by punishing. All *discipline* proceeds from the shepherd's healing love, for even excommunication itself is not meant to destroy, but to save souls (1 Cor. v. 5). Because love in so many has waxed cold, therefore it is that discipline in so many churches has fallen into disuse. May the Lord remove from us all *false* love, which abhorreth *not* that which is evil (Rom. xii. 9); and may He give to His ministers *holy* love, in the strength of which they too may give their lives for the sheep, in the sense of preferring the pain of being obliged to reprove and chastise, to that comfortable self-seeking which is silent concerning the sins of the Church (Isa. lvi. 10), and which brings instead of the sword *that* peace which the Lord Jesus has not brought (Matt. x. 34).

To *give food*, to *lead*, to *protect*, to *heal*: this then is what is meant by *feeding*. Who is sufficient for these things? He only who *praying* feeds, who *praying* leads, who *praying* heals. That which gives power and sanctity to the Christian life, and especially to the shepherd's life, is a praying and interceding heart. Martin Boos confesses that he got all his official blessings by prayer. May the Holy Ghost make all shepherds to be true *praying* men! Augustine most justly says: "A true preacher makes it his chief concern so to preach that he may gladly be heard and easily understood; and he is assured that this end is accomplished more by devout praying than by clever preaching. Therefore, before speaking to his hearers of God, he will first speak with God, both for himself and for them; and in the hour when about to open his mouth to satisfy others, he sends forth his thirsting soul towards God, that he may give to drink of that which he himself has drunk, and may water with what he has drawn."

Just as before, when Peter heard the word, "*It is the Lord!*" he hastened towards Him with overflowing love, so doubtless did he now with joy and gladness take upon himself the holy commission of feeding the sheep of Jesus. And then is it revealed to him, that the love which he had just confessed shall

be rewarded with that task, involving the heaviest sacrifices, which the Lord now intrusts to His disciple's faithfulness. In feeding the flock he was to be led by a way which was directly contrary to his nature.

Ver. 18. "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.*"

He who says this is He who knows all things, and He confirms it with His twofold *Verily*,—and the infallibility of this *Verily* Peter had in his own case experienced (chap. xiii. 38). When Peter was still young, a young Christian, he girded himself, tucked up his garments for vigorous onward strides, and walked whither he would: to follow his Lord was his heart's delight and joy, and of pain and conflict he had as yet known but very little, when in the ardour of youthful love he had exclaimed, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" or when on the holy mountain he had wanted to build three tabernacles. Ay, and even in this hour, when he "*girt his fisher's coat unto him, and did cast himself into the sea,*" he was still girding *himself* and walking whither *he* would: his inclination, his temperament, was not opposed to this powerful drawing of his love to Jesus; Simon, *son of Jonas*, and Simon *Peter* were here one. But thus it could not last. When he should be old, when he should have attained to the Christian's old age (the Lord forewarns him), then would his love be exercised more in *suffering* than in *doing*, more in submitting and enduring than in venturing and contending. He was from experience to take as his own watchword what he himself has written (1 Pet. v. 6): "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God."

The *other*, who was to lead Peter against his own will, is God with His powerful hand. This leading we trace in the Acts of the Apostles. Peter is forced to give up his ardent de-

sire to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel into the fold of Christ ; Israel becomes not Israel ; Peter is obliged to leave the holy city, which has only imprisonment and the sword to give to the servants of their King ; to Samaria his sovereign Leader leads him, and into the house of the Gentile Cornelius, and at length to Rome, the new Babylon, from whence he strengthened the elect strangers of the dispersion whom Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, had brought into the fold of Israel, strengthened them in the enduring of persecution, and against the seductions of false prophets. From Jerusalem to Babylon—it went against nature. And this offering up of his own life, this becoming free from all will of his own, was to be crowned and to have its perfecting in the martyr's death, by which he should glorify God : then would he stretch out those hands which had been so active in his youth, to be bound to the cross ; instead of the girdle of his youth an executioner's rope would tuck up his garments (comp. Acts xxi. 11) ; instead of walking whither he would from one Pentecostal harvest to another, he should be led whither he would not, to the painful and ignominious death of the cross.

The Lord knew that Peter loved Him ; and *that* He knew it, He could not have shown more clearly to the disciple who had been grieved by His threefold question respecting his love, than by this prophecy to him of his martyrs' life and death. Love to Jesus became strong enough to lead Peter in youth and in old age, and that not alone whither his *Simon* inclination would also lead him, but also whither it would not. As the Lord's prophecy was being fulfilled, and Peter was being led (under Nero in Rome) to the cross, then, as Eusebius relates, his love to Jesus so completely overcame the *not-willing* of his nature, that there was but one thing he would not : he would not be put to death on the cross in the same way that Christ was, deeming himself not worthy of such an honour ; he begged it as a favour from his executioners that he should be nailed to the cross with his head downwards.

By this death Peter *glorified* God, John says (comp. 1 Pet. iv. 16). Walking in that love, with which Christ had loved him and given Himself for him, he offered up his inmost life to God for a living sacrifice (Rom. xii. 1); and therein was God glorified in him, that at the end of his education in the school of denial his will and his mind were shown to be transformed by love into the likeness of Jesus Christ; even by that love, in the strength of which he gladly surrendered up to the torture of the cross the last repugnance of his nature to suffering. "Be the horror at the pains of death ever so great, greater still is the power of the love wherewith He is loved, who, as our life, tasted death for our sake; God's glorification by the death of His saints would be less, if the terror of death were less which they overcome of death." (Augustine.) Yet let us not forget what Ambrose says: "If we die for Christ, He has first died for us that His death may be our gain; our dying, on the contrary, is not His gain, but our own; we lose a temporal life in order to obtain an eternal life. And, indeed, is it such a very great thing that the servants should die for their good Master, seeing that the Master has died for His wicked servants?"

The martyr's cross stands not at the end of every Christian's life; but to no Christian is it permitted to finish his course without being led forth out of Peter's youth into Peter's old age; without being exercised in the way of the cross, in which all his own willing and all his own reasoning must cease and die, in order that the subdued and quieted heart may rest upon the heart of God in passive self-surrender, in the real feeling of sacrifice, in short, in true *love*; and that thus He may be magnified, who, according to the riches of His glory, works such miracles in us poor sinners.

Ver. 19. "*This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, He saith unto Him, Follow Me!*"

Once Peter had seen his Lord bound and led forth to the death of the cross; then he could not follow Him (ch. xiii. 36).

But now shall he be able, as has just been prophesied to him. Not alone as a shepherd is he to follow the Shepherd, but also as a sheep for the slaughter is he to follow the passover Lamb. The Lord rises up and walks on before Peter, who follows in His footsteps: an image of what was the case with both spiritually. But He who was walking on before Peter was the *Risen* and *Ascending One*: Peter therefore might boldly and gladly walk after Him; for not only to His suffering was he called to follow Him, but to His glory also (comp. 1 Pet. v. 1). When, in old age, shortly before his death, he calls to mind this "showing" of his Lord Jesus Christ, it leads him to speak of dying as in the presence of a joyful resurrection: "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle" (2 Pet. i. 14).

Follow Me! Should a Christian's heart hear this call, this request from his Saviour's lips, and yet refuse to comply? He who followed after *thee*, amidst tears and blood shedding, down into the abyss of thy ruin, until He found thee and laid thee on His shoulders: should He in vain beg and desire thee to follow *Him* until thou dost come to where He is, on the throne of His glory? "He has left us an example that we should follow His steps: in those words the disciple to whom the Lord said, 'Follow Me!' includes with himself all his brethren in this following of the cross. And who would desire to be excluded?"

Ver. 20. "*Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee?*"

When the Lord rose up from the meal and walked away, calling Peter to come after Him, *John* also followed. Was he not *the disciple whom Jesus loved*? Had he not *lain on Jesus' breast* at that supper, when, in compliance with Peter's request, he had confidentially asked the Lord, "Who is he that doth betray Thee?" Could he now consent to be separated from the side of his Lord? True, the word, "Follow Me!" applied first to Peter. But the Lord well knew that the disciple whom *He*

loved loved Him no less than Peter did ; therefore John, too, appropriated to himself this call to follow Jesus, and he was right in so doing.

Ver. 21. "*Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do ?*"

What does he mean by this question ? Some old commentators imagine that it was tender concern for his fellow-disciple whom he so especially loved which led him to ask it. Thus Chrysostom says : " At the supper Peter had not dared to ask Christ himself concerning the traitor, but had put John forward ; therefore he now desires to show his gratitude to him, thinking that John would surely wish, though he might not dare, to ask the Lord concerning himself." It would indeed be a beautiful meaning to his question if it might be rendered into some such words as these : " Dear Lord, Thou hast entrusted to me a precious but an arduous office, and Thou hast revealed to me a suffering future ; *but what shall this man do ?* In my many tribulations shall I be without my very dearest companion ? must I be deprived of his help and comfort ?" But the Lord's stern answer to Peter makes known to us a wholly different meaning to his question. He had without murmuring yielded up himself and the conduct of his life to the Lord's will ; but, that it was only just *his* love that had to look forward to such heavy trials, that John should have less to bear than he : this he could not understand. There is, it is true, in his question nothing of grudging or ill-will towards his fellow-disciple ; yet there is painful surprise and sadness at the thought, that the Lord deemed an *especially* painful way to be necessary for him. What ! was it the case that the suffering of the martyr's death which awaited him was another punishment for his denial ? and was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, as a proof of this especial love, to be spared the same bitter suffering ? There was plainly something not quite pure in Peter's question ; he was, in fact, still sinful ; well for him that it was a *Jesus* whom he loved, a High Priest who can have compassion on our infirmities,

and who cleanses us from all impurity. Therefore the Lord turned right again his disciple who had deviated from pure simplicity, and said to him :—

Ver. 22. "*If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me.*"

In these mysterious words there is yet one thing that shines out bright and clear: the Lord turns away Peter's gaze from looking forward into his fellow-disciple's course, back to that course which had been pointed out to himself; it is not for him to desire to know whether the same tribulations are necessary for John as for him; with perfect quietness and submission, with entire resignation, he has only to commit his own way to the Lord, in the assurance that if not too small a share of the cross has fallen to his lot, neither also has too much. "Be contented and rest in the God of thy life," was the Lord's exhortation to him in this word.

"In like manner, every believer, every follower of Jesus, has his own suffering; one this, another that, according as it is best for each. Therefore each one must take up only *his own* cross and follow Jesus, without troubling himself about other crosses. Not one is spared; not one has too little to bear; but not one, either, has too much, so that he is not able to bear it. sufferings are different both in number and amount, and also in the way and manner of them; and from eternity, that which is best for each one has been allotted to him; therefore he must not tarry on his way to compare himself with another, but must only daily bear what the Lord lays upon him." (Bogatzky.)

But not Peter alone; John likewise is remembered in these words of the Lord. John had not asked what should befall him; for he knew that with Jesus nothing but happiness could befall him, whether in living or dying, whether amongst roses or thorns; but unasked the Lord allows to the disciple of His love a look into his future, and as He had previously promised to Peter the glories of a martyr's death, so He now promises to him a *tar- rying till I come*. It is true He only says, "*If I will that*

he tarry till I come," not, "*I will* that he tarry;" and it is possible that Peter understood, and was meant to understand, the Lord's answer as chiefly meaning: *If* it were *My will* that he should not die like thee, ay, and that he should not die at all, but live and *remain* until *My* coming again (1 Thess. iv. 17): what is that to thee? should it make thee discontented? At all events the notion could not have gone abroad among the brethren that "*this disciple should not die*," if they had so exactly retained the remembrance of the Lord's word as John himself did.

Ver. 23. "*Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that this disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto Him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*"

According to the Lord's prophecy, John was *tarrying* long after Peter had finished his course. He was *tarrying* when there was no other apostle left in the Church. He was *tarrying* when the Lord had come in judgment upon Jerusalem, and was thus of the number of them whom the Lord addressed in the words: "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man *coming* in His kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28). Until what coming of the Lord did he then tarry? How might he himself explain this word, since he denied as mistaken the meaning put upon it by his brethren? That he understood more in it than only this, that the Lord would reserve the guidance of the disciple of His love to His own supreme will; that he too understood the, "*If I will*" to include an "*I will*": this is clearly seen from the manner in which he again quotes the Lord's words. He does not lay the stress exclusively on the word *If*; but he will not, either, suffer the brethren to change the, "*tarrying till I come*" into merely, *not dying*. He also thought that he should remain until Jesus came; but *in what way* Jesus would come and call him hence, this he left, in perfect, quiet simplicity, to his God without seeking to know.

And the Lord Himself taught him to understand His word, when He gloriously fulfilled it in him. For even before He came to him with that gentle and blessed hour which was his last, to receive him to Himself (chap. xiv. 3), he granted him to know by experience for what end it was that he should *tarry* till such extreme old age, longer than all his fellow-apostles: namely, for this, that he might behold in holy visions *the coming of the Lord* in His kingdom, and, as the prophet of the New Testament, might deliver to its people the *Revelation*, which commences thus: "*Behold, He cometh with clouds!*" and ends thus: "*Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*"

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